

# THE LADDER

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER, 1972

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# THE LADDER

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COVER: Pat Minardi. *Looking Glass*. 1971. Oil on canvas. Collection of the artist.

## EDITORIAL

by Gene Damon

This is the last issue of THE LADDER. After 16 complete continuous years of publication, there are to be no more issues. Many women reading this editorial will be upset, many will be sorry. None of you will be as sorry as we are to have to take this step.

To those of you who have supported us by word, deed and money, as well as by writing for these pages, we simply wish the best in the future. For those of you who have casually read us through the years, indeed sometimes intending to subscribe, but not ever quite getting around to it, we wish you whatever you deserve and leave it to your own consciences to decide just what that might be.

Elsewhere in this issue we discuss the sale of back issues and the impending index of all back issues. Both of these things will continue. We will continue to supply back issues of THE LADDER to all interested parties as long as our supply lasts, and we will be publishing the complete index of all 16 years of THE LADDER. (See notices elsewhere and order NOW.)

The bibliography, THE LESBIAN IN LITERATURE, is still available and will continue to be sold.

Writers who have sent material that has not been used or previously returned are invited to write at once, sending stamped self-addressed envelopes for return of manuscripts on hand. All unused material on hand not asked for will be destroyed December 1, 1972.

## FANTASY COMES BETWEEN ME AND REALITY

My energy's used up in fantasy.  
I rest my hand on someone's knee  
And share this quiet moment  
Of listening to wind  
In summer-full trees—  
A woman who actually  
Is halfway across town  
Spending her time with another.

My room's knee deep  
In the powdered ashes  
Of feelings born of dreams  
That burned across my mind last night;  
So eager for it to happen,  
So afraid it won't,  
I pre-live our love in fantasy.

If I don't watch out,  
I'll have lived the whole thing through  
Without benefit of you.



DRAWING BY ADELE CHATELIN

Heather

# CATHOLICISM AND THE LESBIAN

By RITA LAPORTE

It would seem that nothing is more inimical to the Lesbian than the Catholic Church. More generally, Religion and Lesbianism do not mix. Even heterosexual feminism is heretical in Religion's eyes. This is reflected in the current women's liberation literature: the bulk of it is entirely secular while another, smaller and separate, literature attempts to find a way to fit heterosexual feminism into Christianity. But a Lesbian who finds her spiritual home in the Catholic Church must be more than a little schizophrenic. During my years as an atheist I held to a curious conviction, one that struck me as curious then and curious now: that if I ever became a Catholic it would prove that I had lost my mind. I became a bona fide baptised Catholic at the age of forty. Had I lost my sanity? Naturally I would not admit to that, but I did have to eat those words somehow.

It all began with a brief experience one starlit night in the woods when my life had reached its nadir, a sudden knowledge of God's existence, an intellectual meeting with the Being who knows us all. It was another seven years before I stood at the Catholic baptismal font. I will not detail the particular path that led me there; I prefer to attempt to explain how I see the Catholic Church and, more generally, how I see Religion. First, let me say that Christianity was the last of the great Religions I investigated and I chose it not so much for its supposed superiority to other Religions, but because I was born into the western world. It seemed a bit foolish for me to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, when I grew up steeped in European culture. To become a Jew seemed equally futile, having no Jewish blood that I know of. To become a Moslem was out of the question, knowing Islam's treatment of women. I allowed myself to drift, guided by God so it seemed, into the Catholic Church.

I had been for many years not simply non-Catholic, but anti-Catholic. An early problem to be faced was where my Lesbianism fit in — a heinous Catholic sin! During that short contact with God there had been no suggestion that I love a woman was a sin. Fine. The Church was wrong. Since then I have found the Church wrong about almost everything, as I will explain below. I

also became for a time fearfully worried that the Church would inhibit my capacity to think, would cramp my mind and force it into a straightjacket. If that were so, I would have to flee from it. A Religion that stunted that most human of activities, the exercise of the mind, was an insult to God.

Well, Religion with a capital R is perhaps the most stultifying institution on earth. What do I mean, then, by Religion? It is an elaborate code of behavior supported by the rationalizations of male theologians. I have delved into books on theology from time to time and generally found them boring and irrelevant. My mind is not cluttered with theological studies, which I find something of an advantage. It forces me to make up my own theology, one that rests, among other things, upon the assumption that the Lesbian is fully as human, as much a child of God, as anyone else, male and/or heterosexual. Religion, as it looks to the outsider and particularly when one looks at the Catholic Church, is a hardening of a particular culture. It sanctifies ancient social mores. It puts into legal form what the average mentality accepts, then digs its heels in to make change as difficult as possible. Pope Paul VI pontificates against birth control, but is silent on spiritual matters. He elevates St. Teresa of Avila and St. Catherine of Siena, both most active women in the intrigues and politics of their time — St. Catherine having been de facto Pope, to the Church's highest honor, Doctors of the Church, while at the same time warning his flock that women are to continue silent. The poor fellow seems not to know what he is doing. My view is that the men who have run the Church since St. Paul set it up have never known what they were doing. They do not even know Jesus; only a few particularly wise saints, generally women, have. And right here is one reason why I am a Catholic. An institution that can exist for nigh onto 2000 years, despite the ignorance of its managers, must be guided by God, by Jesus, by the Holy Ghost — in short by a spirituality above and beyond the grasp of all but a handful of humanity.

For centuries the Catholic Church was, to the men who governed it, a political institution. What mattered was the physical

territory over which it ruled. It looked as though the Church were doomed as the last of the Papal States faded away and the Pope was left with only the Vatican to call his own. But while this political power was waning, power over people's minds was increasing. The heterosexual-patriarchal view of human society was apparently established once and for ever — no more matriarchy, no more Lesbianism and homosexuality as in those dreadful pagan times. In some ways this state of affairs is even better. Political power is merely power over people's bodies, but this heterosexual-patriarchal social power is power over people's minds. The Church fought hard against the budding science of the late middle ages. When Galileo asked some Cardinals to look through his telescope to see for themselves some moons of Jupiter, they declined on the irrefutable ground that Aristotle had not mentioned those moons and hence they could not be. The Church has lost to Galileo and now it is trying to hold the line against feminism. It looks as though patriarchy is softening up just a little here and there. Some nuns and some Catholic laywomen are getting through to the male hierarchy. But Lesbianism? That is still in the future, but the Church's stand against Lesbianism and homosexuality will fade away to defeat in time. And then what will be left?

The business of religion with a small r. The Church will have cleared away all that is not religion and will at last get about its proper business, serving people's spiritual needs, freeing their minds and their souls. I have no idea what the Church will then be. Perhaps it will be something like what it is to me now — a growing body of spiritual truth, the power of God in the minds of persons.

† † †

Jesus is a central figure in Christianity, one, it seems to me, whose teachings have escaped theology. Another central figure in Catholic Christianity is Mary. Here is another reason I chose Catholicism. Though male theologians (the only ones until recently) have made an asexual, submissive moron of her, I do not accept this any more than I do the other hogwash they have invented. There are ideas in the Catholic dogma that I interpret to suit myself. Mary was the only human being born without sin. Without going into the meaning of "born in sin," it still remains that no man was born without sin. Jesus is, after all, God as well

as human in the Catholic and most Protestant views and in this context does not count. It was a woman and only a woman who reached the height of saintliness. Not only that, but the most recent dogma, proclaimed by Pope Pius XII, is that only Mary among human beings was raised bodily into Heaven prior to the second coming. To Catholics Mary is the Mother of God. Rather than try to comprehend contorted theological explanations for this strange state of affairs, I like to take it literally. I do not mean to fall into idolatry, into Mariolatry, that so upsets Protestants. The Catholic Church also finds itself embarrassed by the millions in many parts of the world who still worship Mary in her many guises, while more or less ignoring Christ. It may be that the simple peasants of the world know something our eminent theologians do not. It may be that they, deep down in their heart of hearts, do not find women so reprehensible. This may be only a conceit of the powerful males in the Church and those jockeying for power, the priesthood.

When I say that Jesus has so far not been understood, I mean that the supposed necessity for fitting Him into our heterosexual-patriarchal social structure has distorted much of what he stands for. The blanket of social mores under which He was born and which He himself pierced is still held tightly over the risen Christ. Few in any age were aware that Jesus soared high above this smothering blanket. Only recently and for the first time I read an article (*Jesus was a Feminist* by Leonard Swidler in CATHOLIC WORLD, Jan. 1971) that demonstrates clearly and convincingly that Jesus was indeed a feminist. Jesus as feminist puts Him into contemporary language, but what Jesus was goes beyond this current battle of the sexes. Jesus was a complete human person; he was the ultimate human being toward whom we may all aspire and, as such, was utterly beyond sexism. For perceptive people today, men as well as women, this is not too terribly shocking, but that Jesus might have been homosexual is beyond contemplating. But the mind uncluttered with any value judgments as to the innateness of heterosexual love (as opposed to copulation for the purpose of propagating the species) or its superiority to Lesbian love, Jesus appears, on the surface of things to be homosexual rather than heterosexual. He gathered men around Him and was particu-



larly fond of St. John. He did not show toward any woman this special kind of affection. And, as we all know, He never came even close to marrying. He was not a social reformer in the usual sense; He did not attempt to change the social arrangements into which He was born; He transcended them and gave us an example of the truly human person living as such despite a plethora of cramping social conventions. Whether He was homosexual or heterosexual is ultimately irrelevant. The question is relevant today only because all churches proclaim the sinfulness of Lesbianism and homosexuality. Appeals to Jesus Himself on behalf of male and heterosexual superiority are unwise as Jesus neither spoke nor lived in a manner upholding either.

Why was God, born of woman, born a boy and not a girl? Theologians latch onto this fact to prove the superiority of the male over the female. One may also ask why Jesus was born when He was and why a Jew. Second guessing God is a tempting intellectual game, but I for one find it futile and presumptuous. However, I can play the game as well as male theologians. According to the latter there is meaning in the fact of Jesus' most lowly birth. Could it be that birth as a male is lower than birth as a female? This has a ridiculous sound to it. But it is no more ridiculous than all other attempts to set men above women as Theological Truth. God, having decided to become human about the year zero, figured men needed an example of true humanhood more than did women. It was men who had puffed themselves up out of all proportion to the truth and turned to the exploitation of their fellow humans — women. After almost 2000 years, Jesus' example has yet to sink into the minds of established Churchmen, but it is beginning to reach minds outside the hierarchy. When anger and rage tempt me to think men are simply biologically and spiritually inferior to women, that to educate them out of their prideful maleness is an impossible task, I remember Jesus. If only one man in all time thus far has attained complete humanhood, then one cannot say it is in the nature of things impossible. If one answers that Jesus was, after all, God and thus somehow not completely human, this is error even according to our Catholic theologians. They tell us Jesus was totally human as well as God. His complete humanity is devoid of heterosexual and male chauvinism, though his world certainly was not. The true

Christian, then, is extremely rare. Even the great Saints have found it difficult to imitate Christ in the matter of male versus female. But it is curious how, in the achievement of sainthood, as opposed to achievement in lesser areas such as art, philosophy, and science, women are the equal of men. In a dispassionate study of the great saints of Christendom (not the totality of canonized Saints, some of whom never existed) women are second to none. They shine forth as equal or superior to the male saints. Whereas in art and science, in "glorious" achievement generally, the men have all the advantage, this is not so in the most difficult of realms, the love of God, the calling of the true Christian.

† † †

As an ex-atheist I realize I am treading on thin ground when I speak of the saints. The word used to conjure up in my mind simple minded do-gooders who mouthed moralistic platitudes any good atheist practiced. Later, in a philosophy course at college, I was introduced to "mysticism," a concept my scientifically oriented mind was unable to grasp. Before discussing mysticism further, I must define the word as I am using it for it has two meanings quite at odds with each other. Turning to Webster's International Dictionary, Second edition, definition No. 2 states: "A theory of mystical knowledge; the doctrine or belief that direct knowledge of God, of spiritual truth, of ultimate reality, etc., is attainable through immediate intuition, insight, or illumination . . ." Definition No. 4 is "vague speculation; . . . a belief without foundation." The latter meaning, "belief without foundation," is the one most people think of when the words, *mysticism*, *mystical*, and *mystic*, are used. I mean by the word, "the doctrine that spiritual truth is attainable through illumination."

It was not until some years after my brief illumination that I came across the book, *MYSTICISM*, by Evelyn Underhill (1910), a classic on the subject. To me it is no accident that this book, that meant and means so much to me, was written by a woman. Underhill opened up for me the world known to the great mystics, that spiritual world that few have been able to penetrate for most of us are too lazy. It was in this book that I "discovered" my favorite Saint, Teresa of Avila, and that saints are the most distinctively human of people. They are truly persons, no two alike. As the

mystic progresses in love for God and toward union with God she becomes not less, but more human, more distinct in her personality. This is something of a paradox for, as a human being strives to imitate Christ, to surrender her will to God's, to unite with God, her progress does not make her more like others engaged in the same endeavor, but brings out her true personality. The great saints are forceful and unique persons, far more so than the rest of us who succumb in varying degrees to social "adjustment." I found them by far the most inspiring of great women and men, far more so than the greats in any other field of human endeavor.

What is so nice about these saints — and the Catholic Church as it gives us the saints — is that one can pick one's favorite. Any one of them can teach us a way toward God, but we can pick one whose personality appeals to us on the purely human level. Naturally I chose a woman. While men deliberately bar women, in all sorts of ways, from achieving worldly fame and success, even the Catholic Church is unable to close the highest of human achievements from women — mystical knowledge. The Church has kept the Papacy for men only, but how far above Popes have the women saints soared! While men, presumably Christian men like bishops, have put all manner of impediments to personhood in the way of women, neither God in heaven nor Jesus on earth has. It is perhaps a long way from the heights of sainthood to the mere courage to be what I am — a Lesbian, but my distance from God is not so much the issue as my strength to be myself. And here is where those saints who have left us records of their journeys to God continue to give me inspiration. Like my St. Teresa in her younger days, I need to read the words of those whose spiritual knowledge far outdistances mine, in order to keep myself more or less aimed in the right direction.

Mystical knowledge is, of course, nothing more than "belief without foundation" for many. For me it is ultimate Reality, ultimate Truth, though I must get it second hand for the most part, from those who have been there. The French philosopher and Catholic convert, Jacques Maritain, places types of knowledge in a hierarchical order, the lowest being scientific knowledge. If I remember rightly, philosophical knowledge is next, then theological knowledge. The highest knowledge is the

mystical. For myself I am not sure about either philosophical or theological knowledge — both seem to me closer to ignorance than to knowledge, probably because they are so steeped in sexism. But I emphatically agree that science is the lowest form of knowledge. Within its limited sphere, science can be a great good, but the attempt to cast all human knowledge into its limited mold is sheer stupidity. I tried to do just this for many years, secure in the belief that science was the best and only way to achieve the ultimate in the good life for all. My fall from this conceit was total.

† † †

It is often said that this is the post-Christian era. I think it is still pre-Christian. The past 2000 years have not been a total loss, some little progress has been made. Two recent articles by Mary Daly (*After The Death of God The Father*, in *COMMONWEAL*, March 12, 1971 and *The Courage To See*, in *THE CHRISTIAN CENTURY*, September 22, 1971) are evidence of progress toward a society of people more like Jesus, a society the world has not yet known. My quarrel with Mary Daly three years ago was over some foolishness of hers, in her book, *THE CHURCH and the SECOND SEX*, about oppressed mothers turning their sons into homosexuals. She said nothing about Mom making Lesbians of daughters. Presumably the liberation of women would do away with homosexuality, but what it might do for Lesbianism was an untouched topic. Daly has made a tiny bit of progress since then — she now says nothing about either Lesbianism or homosexuality. I went over her articles with a fine tooth comb, looking for statements that could be used to trap her into admitting that heterosexual life styles are no more authentic to humanity than Lesbian life styles. One of the "embarrassing" consequences of consciousness raising in women is that more of them than in the past are discovering their Lesbianism. Daly speaks in radical feminist language; she is no dilute feminist. She knows that sexism is the fundamental oppression upon which all others rest — "the rhetoric of racism finds its model in sexism." She speaks of the "sisterhood of women" which "implies the sisterhood of man . . . a spiritual movement, because it means the becoming of women and therefore of humankind." Daly thinks that Phase One, the "exposition and criticism of our male-centered heritage" has been accom-



plished and the way is open now "for the logical next step in creative thinking. We now have to ask how the women's revolution can and should change our whole vision of reality. . . . What I am discussing here is an *emergence of women* such as has never taken place before. . . . it will involve a change in the fabric of human consciousness. . . . We are called upon to be attentive to what the new experience of the becoming of women is revealing to us." (Italics mine). Is Daly attentive to an emergence of women who are Lesbians? While for a Catholic theologian she is remarkably attentive to sexism, where does she stand on "heterosexism"?

It seems curious offhand that the greatest oppressions are the last to emerge into the public consciousness, yet on further thought this is to be expected. The more total the oppression, the more difficult it is to unear. In the 19th century, the women's movement followed upon the movement to free male slaves. In trying to help them, women discovered their own slavery, but Lesbians held their tongues and the women's movement fizzled out in the first quarter of this century. In this new women's movement, Lesbians are refusing to be kept under the rug. And here we face a remarkable dilemma. Daly speaks of the 'cognitive minority,' those women and a few men who are aware of the evils of sexism. Many female members of this cognitive minority are teachers and professors, in psychology, sociology, theology, etc., and many of them are Lesbians. While it is somewhat risky to be a female feminist professor, the threat of economic ruin is almost total should one dare to admit to being a Lesbian professor, feminist or otherwise. Where one would normally look for the most advanced thinking — in the colleges and universities — is just where one looks futilely for any enlightenment in the area of sexuality (other than the entrenched heterosexual variety.) The order of oppression from least to most is: black males, heterosexual females, Lesbians. Nowhere is this clearer than in the Catholic Church.

There are black priests, even black bishops. There are also many homosexual priests. The Catholic hierarchy is a homosexual sort of community, though this is carefully hidden from the laity and from the consciousness of the hierarchy itself. It is no secret to some of us that the priestly garb, the long dress, appeals to those men

who enjoy getting up in drag. And what is the requirement of celibacy? It requires the priesthood to forego what many of them do not care for to begin with. Why is there such resistance to married priests? Because those who do not wish to be involved intimately with women are more likely to stand out and be objects of suspicion? What about homosexual celibacy? Is there any such thing? What does celibacy mean? Proscription of the reproductive act or proscription of orgasm?

From time to time I have attempted to penetrate that most impenetrable curtain of all, the one that makes the Iron and Bamboo Curtains look positively porous — the Theological Curtain. I have written to "radical" nuns and even "confessed" my terrible "sin" to nuns of my acquaintance. I have actually felt sorry for them — so put on the spot to be "Christian" and yet so terrified of a creature like me. Needless to say, I have so far made no progress. I would do better trying to claw my way with my finger nails through the ancient wall of China. I know that Lesbianism is a "problem" in the convents, though no nun will admit to this, for it is too awful to put into words. For the spiritually inclined woman, giving up hetero-sex is easier than foregoing Lesbian intimacy. Like many Lesbians, it has crossed my mind that I might have made a good religious and I have found stories, true and fictional, of the religious life fascinating and absorbing. My identification with the dedicated nun is intense. But in such day dreams reality eventually intrudes and I realize I am thinking of being a monk, among men, where the temptation to love a particular person in a manner involving my sexuality is absent. In this line of dreamy imagining I have been led to question the Catholic principle that marriage and sainthood do not mix. Why should love of another human being, a love including sexual expression, bar one from saintliness? Perhaps the lust of the male for the female is contrary to sainthood, for that is the use of another person's body for one's own pleasure. I suspect that the male initiated emphasis upon celibacy is a direct result of the ease and frequency with which the male experiences mere lust. Since this aspect of the matter must be glossed over, we find elaborate rationalizations about "detachment," and about focussing all one's love upon God. Marriage then becomes a state inferior to the single state, while as something of a contradiction, it is

made a sacrament.

One might brush off the whole problem of aspiring to sainthood by saying, "who am I to entertain so lofty an ambition?" Except for one thing. While reading St. Teresa's INTERIOR CASTLE one day and telling myself I was inordinately presumptuous to imagine undertaking the path to sainthood, it suddenly popped into my mind that this "humility" was nothing more than the rationalization of my laziness. I broke out laughing when, shortly after having this sobering thought, St. Teresa told her nuns just that — that she would accept nothing less than that they aspire to become saints. That left me without a leg to stand on. Sainthood after all, in its personal meaning, has nothing to do with being canonized by the Church. It has to do with spiritual growth, the hardest kind and the one we like to excuse ourselves from attempting. But must I choose between Lesbian love and love of God?

St. Teresa became a nun because she could not abide the only alternative available to her — marriage to a man. And with a formidable determination and after many years of shilly-shallying, she succeeded. She embraced the tradition of the nun and transcended it as few have. She warned her nuns against touching and against favoritism. She was right to do so in the context of her reformed Carmelite convents for a Lesbian love affair within the structure of conventual life would have been disrupting. But does it follow that sainthood is barred to the non-celibate Lesbian? I have to answer, No, even though that answer removes a handy excuse for my slackness in pursuing sainthood.

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I am well aware that I am a very peculiar Catholic, one the Pope would excommunicate on the spot if I were an important personage. But I do not recognize the Pope's nor anyone else's authority to excommunicate me. I was, fortunately, spared a Catholic upbringing and was not introduced to the Catechism until I was 39. I expected it to be a waste of time, but some months of weekly catechism class were a precondition to baptism that I had agreed with myself to suffer through. I had already decided from my readings in religion that a Catholic I wanted to be and I could afford to put up with some stupidity to get there — call it penance. The Catechism was even worse than I had expected. It was almost totally devoid of anything spiritual and was

leadly heterosexual. Naturally I kept mum about my Lesbianism, a sly deception of course, but one necessitated by the Church's own deceptiveness. I even tried to experience some guilt over entering the Church under false pretenses, but the guilt kept fading away. I held my eye on the underlying spirituality of the situation by treating the Catechism as just another male document and one not without value. In this class with me was a young highschool woman planning to marry a Catholic and who, I knew, was in a mentally retarded class at school. That Catechism must have held some meaning for her, while I had other sources of enlightenment available to me.

The Lesbian born a Catholic is apt to have far more trouble than I. Sooner or later she is pushed into what I consider a false choice: leave the Church or deny her Lesbianism. Either way she is forced into much suffering. I think that, if a choice it must be, leaving the Church is the lesser of the two evils, for leaving the Church need not mean leaving God. Today many women are finding an in between solution, women whose "problem" is feminism, and not necessarily Lesbianism. They are leaving the Church considered as an organization of men, but not the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ. Some Catholic Lesbians are finding a religious outlet in homosexual churches. I have two objections to these churches. A simple one is that they too are essentially male organizations without any comprehension of sexism and the radical changes in society the women's movement hopes to bring about. My more serious objection is that homosexual churches are a form of copout. I have no desire to secede from human society; I am an outcast against my will and because of institutionalized heterosexual-patriarchal blindness. Knowing that God's grace is as available to me as to anyone else, with it I shall continue to assault the Theological Curtain.

†††

Daly, in THE CHURCH AND THE SECOND SEX, came out strongly for women priests. In her COMMONWEAL article she says, "The women's movement will present a growing threat to patriarchal religion less by attacking it than by simply leaving it behind." When I read Daly's defense of a partly female priesthood, I was of two minds. The few priests I had observed seemed to be performing duties any moron could learn to perform and I

had already decided that the higher-ups in the Church were so far from any contact with real human life that, without thinking about it, I held them as less than human. I found it so easy to view the hierarchy as an ignorant group of men without power over me that I felt no anger that women were barred. I was free from their tragic influences over the lives of millions of women and I personally wanted no part of their power. On the other hand, it seemed like a legitimate demand that women be as eligible for the priesthood as men. But I have veered more towards the "leave it behind" strategy. Women who aspire to the priesthood will more than likely take on the coloration of the hierarchy, condemning Lesbianism with an enthusiasm that will make the male Churchmen seem benign in comparison. Even if the entire hierarchy were replaced with women, from the Pope on down, I doubt there would be much change. I still support the right of any woman to be a priest if that is what she wants to be, but it seems to me to be a right to board a sinking ship.

Vatican II looked like the dawn of a new era to many of us, but I think now it heralded the demise of an old era. How else explain Pope Paul VI's reactionary regime except as a last ditch stand to preserve the decaying shell of patriarchal absolutism? Knowing how slowly the Church changes, I expect it to take hundreds of years to die out in its present form. Nor can I envision its future form. In the meantime my course and, I hope, the course of many Catholic women, is to leave that which the priesthood imagines to be their Church, a paramilitary assemblage of males seeking power and authentication in an organization more and more detached from human society. A first step is to cease dropping anything into the collection plate. The idea that a monetary contribution of mine should pay some Catholic lobbyist to pressure a legislator to vote against repeal of abortion laws curls my hair. It is unthinkable, as well as unconstitutional. Though I, along with all women, am not covered by the Constitution and hence need not abide by it, I firmly believe in the separation of Church and State and will not perform the illegal act of contributing to the Church's power to coerce our secular governments. It is time the Church stood on its own two feet, hurling anathema at sinners (women who use the Pill, Lesbians who dare to love) if it must, but without the support of secular

government. The separation of Church and State should mean the separation of sin and crime. The collusion between the two is deeply felt by the Lesbian. A pox on both their houses.

Daly speaks of the theological community's "ostrich syndrome." Then she says that "The work of fostering religious consciousness which is explicitly incompatible with sexism will require an extraordinary degree of creative rage, love, and hope." I admire Daly's courage in attacking that ostrich syndrome. But, since I must attack not only male, but heterosexual chauvinism, I find I have no stomach for arguing with men. Nor am I qualified in the field of theology. I find I must tackle this field from scratch, making use of any ideas of others that hold meaning for me, but being very careful to ground it all upon my own experience. For me Christianity holds, hidden within, a most important doctrine - the dignity of the person. No group or collective can take the place of one's personhood if one has the courage to be. Daly is right in saying that "The courage to see and to be . . . expresses itself in sisterhood." But not in a sisterhood that attempts to swallow up the person, or as a group of women who willingly deny their individuality.

Speaking of sisterhood, Daly says that while "The Christian churches have been fond of preaching 'the brotherhood of man,' which included women incidentally as baggage," this brotherhood "begins by excluding women as 'other' and goes on from there, cutting off the 'others' by familial, tribal, racial, national, economic and ideological categories." Sisterhood is not the female counterpart of brotherhood. "It implies first of all polarization for the sake of women's internal wholeness or oneness - because . . . women suffer from a duality of consciousness in their innermost being. . . . They want to speak and act but satisfy themselves with acting through men. They want to be true to themselves, but instead they are true to the internalized image of themselves that they have been taught to believe will be pleasing to men." (Italics mine). Daly seems to have only heterosexual women in mind here. She says, "sisterhood implies polarization for the sake of political oneness, for the sake of achieving liberation in society. . . . Having identified themselves with the male consciousness, women have tended to see the creative or rebellious female as

their own enemy." "The creative or rebellious female" is frequently a Lesbian, far more frequently than heterosexuals realize and that Lesbians are able to establish. If I say that Queen Elizabeth the First was a Lesbian, I will run into so much resistance that my attitude is "why bother?" If I say that a well known living woman is a Lesbian, I am breaking the unwritten code that one Lesbian does not expose another, that the right to come out in public belongs only to that Lesbian herself. And so, while Lesbians are everywhere in the women's movement and are a sizable force in the sisterhood, few are aware of this fact.

Parallel to the dictum that the most oppressed are the last to venture after their human rights is another, similar, one: that the most fundamental discipline, the source of the ideas underlying our culture, that is, Christian theology, is the last stronghold against sisterhood, particularly those sisters who are Lesbians. Where women are concerned theology sees only breeding, not love. It is so far not possible to determine the sex of the young foetus nor whether it is Lesbian or homosexual. It is always possible that it is heterosexual-male and thus the foetus, in the eyes of the Catholic Church, has greater rights than most post-natal foetuses, namely those who become identifiable at birth as female, or later as Lesbian or homosexual. The greatest reverence for life is reserved for the pre-natal state thereof. An older tradition of the Church and of the ancient Hebrews held that the waste of sperm was as sinful as abortion. In those days the male "seed" was thought to represent the entire future human being. Carrying foetus worship further, I have wondered why the Church has not got round to condemning women who allow their ova to be flushed out month after month. I calculate that I have now "murdered" some 300 healthy ova, 30 of which might have become human beings had I seen to their fertilization. This does seem to be carrying things a bit too far, but this is where current Churchly thinking on abortion leads me. Once more I am lead back or forward to love, not breeding.

A "sisterhood" that attempts to exclude Lesbians is one still hung up on breeding, not because Lesbians are incapable of having children or of being good mothers - they are as suited to both as any women, but because of the deep-seated and as yet seldom examined idea that only male and female should come together sexually. This

idea persists even in those who favor birth control devices and a woman's right to abortion. But, if sexual union is permitted in some instances as an expression of love where it is known before hand that no child can possibly result, then upon what ground is Lesbian love sinful? The Catholic Church tries, on the one hand, to say that the sexual act must always have the possibility of leading to pregnancy and, on the other, allows the rhythm method. And I wonder what Canon Law says about young married women who have had hysterectomies? Are they denied all sexual contact? If mutual love and attraction underlie (or should underlie) sexual union, then we can dispense with the prejudice that such union must be restricted to that between male and female. The sacrament of heterosexual marriage is one of patriarchy's cleverest hoaxes.

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What do I understand by sisterhood? For me it is a spiritual union of all women who have felt that basic, naked oppression that remains after all other sorts of oppression have been recognized and delt with. Sisterhood is indivisible, while there are many brotherhoods. This sisterhood is as yet thinly populated, but it extends over the whole world and lies beneath all divisions of class, caste, education, nationality, race, and yes even Religion. I have not only Christian sisters, but Hindu and Moslem and Jewish and atheist sisters. Some of my sisters have been dead a long time and most I have not nor ever will meet.

Though ultimately, in agreement with Daly, I envision the sisterhood of humankind (what she erroneously calls "the sisterhood of man"), in the year 1972 I feel only the sisterhood of women. While NOW (the National Organization for Women) continues to support minority males, as recently in its fight against some California banks, Shirley Chisholm is being by-passed by the Black Political Caucus composed of black Congressmen and other prominent black male leaders. Since it is unlikely that these men object to her color, it being the same as theirs, they must be objecting to her sex. The black brotherhood is male and is directed against white males and all females. There is nothing whatsoever that can overcome brotherhood except sisterhood. And this despite the fact that the various brotherhoods now possess 99% of the world's power. The American black brotherhood is pressed for time. If it cannot



quickly grab a share of the white male power structure, it will miss out altogether in the wake of sisterhood.

Sisterhood is not only threatened by men but by many women. In fact, men often unwittingly help to promote sisterhood by being so blatantly sexist. It has become something of a principle among feminists not to vent their rage against women and yet I have found this principle

impossible to follow at all times, particularly when heterosexual "feminists" sneer at Lesbians. I have concluded that this rage is not altogether misplaced. Women who belong to what I call "female brotherhoods," that is, women who put blackness or Religion or heterosexuality, etc., above sisterhood must be recognized as dangerously at odds with true feminism and hence ultimately anti-human.

## LINCOLN PARK

By PATRICIA FULLERTON

It was a hot August day, and I was free to do as I wished. So, as usual, I headed for Lincoln Park. The park stretched for miles along Chicago's lake front, and generally was not too crowded during weekdays. I liked being alone letting my imagination run free.

On this day, the first of this memory, I was being a gazer. I walked past my favorite places: the quiet lagoon with its gentle curves and tempting sounds, the old bridge over the lagoon, and its rusting filigree supports, the island that "no-one" but myself knew about, the old tree, its 3 thick trunks swooping way up into a riot of chattering sparrows and hungry pigeons. I was guessing who everyone was that I passed. I confided in the inanimate objects around me (as probably only an only child can do) just what the world was all about.

Passing through the zoo I had spotted an old man, ragged, smelling, lurching, and I changed my course. He frightened me and I was afraid he might stumble into me and then what would I do? I couldn't stand being embarrassed. I went around another path, headed for the old rusting bridge and leaning over the lagoon water, looked at my own wiggly reflection and wondered who he had been. I tried to imagine him in his mother's arms, still a tiny baby. I pretended to be gazing off into the far distance, but really was sneaking a peek at the old drunk. He was gone however, so I looked back into the brown water. A reflection passed behind me, and turning I saw a boy and girl, much older than me, arms wrapped around each other. I guessed he was the son of a rich man and she was a poor girl, fascinated by his money and worldly ways. I wondered why it didn't bother them to be seen kissing and hugging in public.

Heading for a bench to sit on (the ants, flies and mosquitoes in the grass tickled my legs and I didn't like it), I looked for an unoccupied one. A bench was empty, so I sat, scrunched down so my head could rest on the back, and studied the sky. I decided to dissolve some clouds. Had done it for years. The way you dissolve a cloud is to look hard at a small one and keep on concentrating on it. You can blink, and even look away for a second or so, but your mind must be on that cloud. Soon it will begin to break up. Keep on concentrating and looking hard - and before you know it, it will be gone!

I had almost totally eliminated my first cloud, when I felt a slight vibration through the wooden bench. I turned my head sideways and discovered an older woman settling herself down to read. She was old enough to be my mother, and then some. She must have been 25 or 30. In spite of that she looked okay, so I didn't get up. I just went back to wiping out some more clouds.

My days were spent in or near the park, and I very frequently wound up near that bench. The coldest water fountain was right there, as was the lagoon, and some of my favorite hills, trees and hiding places. I gradually noticed that the woman was there almost as often as I. She never paid any attention to me, didn't even seem to notice me. She just read things, sometimes wrote letters, sometimes looked at or fed the squirrels. So I began to play guesser about her. She was kind-of short, had brown hair combed straight back off her face and short. She always wore straight skirts and tailored blouses and loafers. So I guessed she was a woman very interested in some sport, and she had had a terrible accident

which sort of crippled her, and she had been told by her doctor to stay outdoors a lot and get lots of sunshine and fresh air. I then guessed that she had been very famous and I should be noticed by her. Being quiet and a loner, I'd never go talk to her though, so I just stayed around.

It paid off a bit, because once I was running past (showing off) and went faster than my legs could co-ordinate, and I fell. I slid a bit before stopping and did a great job of scraping both knees. They hurt and began to bleed and I felt like crying. So I made it to that cold water fountain and alternately hung one leg, then the other over it to wash the dirt out and stop the bleeding. I also dripped a lot of quiet tears into the water. Then, there she was. Her hands were soft and gentle and she had a clean handkerchief that she was getting wet and carefully dabbing at my knees. I flinched, expecting pain, but she touched her fingers to my cheek and smiled. I knew then she wouldn't hurt me and I relaxed. After a few minutes she handed me the handkerchief, wrung out and told me to fold it and press it firmly against the cuts. Then she went back to her books. I did as she said and soon I was sort of alright again. I gave her back her handkerchief and said thank you. Now as I think about it, it was a dumb thing to do - what would she want with an old, slightly bloody, slightly wet handkerchief. She smiled though, and dropped her eyes to her book.

I saw her lots after that but never said anything to her. I did look her straight in the eyes when I saw her and tried to look nice, and she always smiled, but we never spoke. For a long time that is.

One day she was there with someone. It was another woman about her age, dressed sort of like her. (Gosh, I guessed, another sick athlete!) They talked and talked, but I stayed out of hearing range. Then I saw them holding hands! WOW! That was strange. But maybe they were sisters. I went on talking to a pigeon I'd found, and later looked back and saw them standing but going nowhere, her books still on the bench. Just as I was going to turn around, I saw the two look about them (no one was around) and then they kissed! right on the lips. These weren't sisters. The strange one walked away and my friend just stood there looking after her. I admit I was rude, but I just stood there too and stared, big-eyed. Then when the strange one was out of sight (she didn't turn back at all) my friend sat

down and stared at the sidewalk in front of her. I pretended to accidentally walk that way, but I purposely had to get closer. She was crying! Gosh. I went home.

I thought I'd never see her again, but she was there just as usual, almost everytime I went to the park.

The way we finally got to say something was, I was seeing how many one-footed hops it took to cross the bridge when this guy stopped me. He was a man about 20, I guess. He said he had seen me in the park a lot. I nodded. He flashed a badge and said he represented the F.B.I. and they needed some junior agents. He said that because I was always in the park I could be one if I wanted. I WANTED. So he said all I had to do was keep my eye out for men who bothered kids. If I saw any I should tell him, as he'd be around, and they'd arrest the man. I wouldn't get any pay, but look how helpful I'd be for my country, and the park.

I was thrilled! I immediately saw myself as the most effective F.B.I. agent ever.

So I watched. For weeks I suspected every male who happened to glance at me. Every day I met the F.B.I. man and we sat on a bench and talked. Even though I had nothing to tell him, I went completely through my dark suspicions of this or that guy. The woman was always near by, always reading, always alone. I wondered if she had any idea just how important I was. Then to really make it great, one day as he was talking to me, he picked up one of my braids and said something about how thick it was and how pretty. My hair to me was hair. It got messed, and dirty, and had to be taken care of, and was just, hair. Yet this real man of the world thought it was pretty. Well!

Some more days passed and as we talked on the bench again, he playfully wrapped the braid across my shoulders and made some dumb comment about not needing clothes with hair like that. He was close and was looking funny. I got a little worried, but put it out of my mind, as he was a government representative and could be trusted.

The next day he came rushing towards me and grabbed me to him and out of breath said,

"Did you see him? Did he bother you? You poor kid." No one had bothered me and I didn't know what he meant. But he was squashing me against him, and he had this funny warm lump just below his



# THE CHALLENGE OF TEACHING WOMEN'S LIBERATION IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

By JUDY FOWLER

The film is over and two girls get up to rewind the film on the projector. Two more girls open the shades and carry stacks of books to the shelves while a boy passes out some paper. When the bell rings, the boys go to lunch and the girls rush down to their favorite class of the week, printing. What's happening? Why are girls running the projector, why are they taking printing?

Women's liberation is a revolution in attitudes which is profoundly challenging and distressing to most of us. Assumptions about one's role in society, what one can and can't do, what one deeply believes about herself (himself) are all coming under question.

Today debate and social action in the women's liberation movement are spreading outward from a small, urban elite to suburbia and the young women in suburbia's junior high schools.

For the past year and a half I have been an English and social studies teacher de jure and a women's liberation counselor in fact in two junior highs near Boston. Inter-mingling women's liberation discussions with regular curriculum, trying to be a model of a "liberated woman" and providing an opportunity for the girls in my classes to take steps toward a freer self-image have been on-going goals in my classroom.

The process of teaching anything in junior high is arduous enough. Even trickier is the process of "consciousness-raising," or making aware of each person's potential as a human being, rather than as a fulfiller of a sex-role.

"You mean, I could be president of a company? I can't understand that some people are telling me 'you can do that - you're a girl,'" exclaimed one of my students, "instead of telling me 'you can't'."

"Talking about women makes me take note of myself more. I see more, like . . . why do writers always say 'he' for 'people' in books? It makes me realize how the 'she's' of the world are invisible!" said another.

"Now that you've asked, there are a lot of sexist things in this school. Boys have the

bigger part of the playground. And they're always acting like they can grab us in the halls if they feel like it!"

"Yeah, and until you talked to Mr. N—, we couldn't take print or shop."

With the beginning of awareness of the differential attitudes toward women and men, or girls and boys in junior high, came strong feelings of impatience.

"Why are the boys so immature? Why can't they take anything seriously? They listen to each other sometimes, but the minute we talk or give a report, they make fun of us and laugh us out of the room," said one of the most earnest students.

"You know," replied her friend, "your report Tuesday was the most interesting we heard. The boys were scared, that's what, scared you would do better than they would!"

Conversations like this and readings from Lucy Komisar, Betty Friedan and others comprise the kicking-off point for many of my women's liberation discussions. Often the sessions delve into personal experiences, where anger is a keynote for many girls.

"Mr. R—, our math teacher, makes my blood boil. I hate him," said one of my most attractive and intelligent girls.

"Why, what does he do?" I ask.

"Every day, you know how he chooses which kids to send to the board to do problems? He picks the girls with the shortest skirts!"

"Yeah," adds a friend, "you can be dumb or smart, awake or bored to death, but if he likes your legs, you'll go to the board."

"And he calls us 'sweetie' all the time," said the first girl.

"Now he's even letting the boys call us 'sweetie' and make loud comments," fumed two other girls.

In spite of some girls' willingness to talk and their growing awareness of differential treatment, there are several strong barriers to effective female liberation teaching in junior high.

In the first place, the kids are all

stomach and he began rubbing it against me. Now I knew a little about life. I mean a 10 year old isn't totally stupid, and I had an idea that something was going on that shouldn't, and now I was scared. Here's this big jerk sticking his fingers in my hair, and bumping the daylight's out of his stomach, or something, and there I was. I was afraid to move or talk or anything. I just stood there feeling awful. Then SHE hurried into my sight. Our eyes met for a second, and I guess she saw I was scared. She yelled something at the F.B.I. guy and he whirled around surprised. She jabbed him a few times in that soft bulge, and it went away. Then she yelled some more and chased him away and I remember one thing, she told him I was her daughter and he better not show up anymore around here. Gosh she was brave, I thought.

Then she circled me in her arms and

held me, talking soft and comforting me, easing the scare out, until I relaxed. Then I started to sob and she steered me towards the bench. We sat and she continued soothing me. She smelled sweet and clean and made me feel just as sweet and clean. I asked her why she said I was her daughter.

Her answer didn't mean much to me then. I just felt that she did it because she wanted to.

But now I am the age she was then, and as I sit here beside the woman I love, I know the love that my "park" friend felt. The gentle concern of a lonely woman for a lonely kid. I feel her determination, imagine her needs, her pride in her sex, and her knowledge of the rottennesses that exist.

I didn't see her much after that. I sort of stayed away from the park because of him. Now I thank her, silently, finally, for being there for me, then.



## Poems

### Lament for Jessica

We're growing apart  
I'm growing  
a part that is not yours  
that may never be part  
of us  
one  
so long  
the two of us

Mary Damon

### Note from the Blood

Certainly, my dear,  
I could write you a polite note,  
typed perhaps,  
for the occasion,  
on elegantly watermarked bond.

Certainly, my dear.  
"My dearest Woman:  
Might I be so honored as to request  
(what?  
your heart?  
your breasts?  
the wine and salt  
of your secret darkness?)

Kathleen M. McKinnon

adolescents (13-14 years old) and thus very much in turmoil psychologically. This means that almost anything I do or say can provoke hostility because I am adding to their confusion about who they are. Both girls and boys sometimes react violently when challenged to question why boys can ask girls out on dates but not vice versa; why people think boys are stronger than girls when there are many facts to the contrary; why people expect boys to do important things in the world as well as be husbands and fathers and girls to become only wives and mothers.

Both sexes at adolescence are threatened more than adults by the challenge to drop the confining aspects of traditional sex-roles and opt for personhood. Personhood is a tough enough goal/process at any age, but at 13 it's especially tough when peer pressure creates myths of beauty and popularity in the traditional sense.

Be all that as it may, there is an overriding reason for upsetting the apple-cart with adolescents. Much of women's liberation, like growing in general consists (unfortunately) in un-learning what ain't so. Therefore, if you never take on at adolescence a confining definition of yourself as inferior (or superior), you'll have a lot less to shuck off later. The premise here, of course, is that liberation for women and men is here to stay — the sooner that one accepts the challenge the better.

Another barrier to effective consciousness-raising is the unfavorable image of women's liberation thanks to television. At my first whisper of women's liberation, many kids shrieked.

"NO!"

"Not those brains who can flatten a guy with one Karate chop!"

"Women's liberation. I hate it. I don't want to burn any bras."

"Why don't they shut up and act like ladies!"

To the initiated woman, visions of Karate chops and bra-burnings are not automatically repugnant. To kids, though, whose worlds consist of the latest eye make-up and *Brains* games, any justifications for extremists' tactics are irrelevant. Unfortunately, the kids' repulsion to extremists carries over into a denial of the real issues involved.

The third major source of trouble for women's liberation teaching comes directly

from the boys. Men tease women at all ages, but nowhere is the teasing and ridicule so vicious as it is in junior high. At 13-14 kids often seem to be stores of cruelty waiting to be released upon any victim, male or female, who shows the slightest sign of weakness. Kids with more pimples, more fat, more "dumbness" or more anything "bad" or unvalued take a lot of abuse. Girls, who have been taught that femininity means a show of weakness and passivity and acceptance of abuse take more than their share because they think it is the natural order.

Almost invariably, for example, when a girl speaks to the class the boys heckle unduly. Only rarely does a "fellow" woman come to her defense.

An effective way to counter male harassment of this sort is to advise the girls that turnabout is fair play. For example, one day three boys tried to give their report on the population explosion. From the girls' side of the room came comments usually heard from the boys:

"Look at his hair!"

"What do you mean by that?"

"This is so boring!"

"You're not nervous, are you?"

"Hey, look at his hands . . . they're shaking."

The boys responded "femininely" — all three blushed, they stammered, they played with their hair, and spoke more and more softly and looked more and more at the floor. They finished and, mouse-like, retreated to their seats.

Since that class session, the boys' heckling has been more tentative and the girls have become more assertive.

Another serious problem in consciousness-raising is one of providing "liberated models". Who can a 13-year-old girl (or boy) look to for encouragement in full personhood? (Me, for one, but I'm not famous and teachers in general don't seem very glamorous.) To help provide models, I have assigned book reports on biographies of women doctors, lawyers, politicians, etc. When I first announced this policy, there were some protests:

"Why do we have to read biographies of women? The boys can read about anyone they choose — why can't we?"

"True," I answer, "but it's important to see what independent women can do with their lives if they choose to."

(I did decide not to insist that boys read biographies of women — I felt that they

would have given mocking reports if forced to read biographies of women.) Since the first book reports, a number of girls have mentioned that they would like to go to medical school or law school.

A good part of the women's liberation movement is political. Women are running for office all over the country and are learning that they can become a strong pressure group. One of my classes was about to elect a representative and an alternate to the student council. They were proceeding to nominate — as most kids and adults do — a boy representative and a girl alternate.

I commented on the sexist assumptions involved and let the girls have a few minutes to talk it over. The election proceeded, hands waved frantically.

"I nominate Jack."

"I nominate Jay."

"I nominate Frank."

And then,

"I nominate Sally."

At this, the girls looked smugly at each other. After a few more nominations (of boys) we cast votes. The final result: Sally, rep and Jack, alternate. Pick a good woman, unite behind her and let the males divide their votes — an elegant lesson in power politics.

The most heated discussions we have had were about abortion. When I asked my classes why they thought women were pushing for liberalized abortion laws, both boys and girls got very excited and highly moralistic at first.

"They just want easy abortions, so they can go to bed anytime they want," said one girl.

"If a woman doesn't want a baby, she shouldn't 'do sex' in the first place!" agreed one of the boys heartily.

"No one would ever kill my baby that way," exclaimed one girl fervently.

"I can't see any reason for abortions. If a woman is married, she's supposed to want kids. If she's not and she fools around, then it's her tough luck. She could always put the kid up for adoption."

Even girls who wanted to run for office, become doctors or were by some other gross measure "liberated," acted very threatened by the issue of abortion reform.

Faced with an emotionally-charged onslaught of this sort, I was hard put to detoxify the abortion issue. I argued that a man "does sex" as much as a woman and is

therefore equally responsible — it's not fair that the woman should bear the burden if she doesn't want to. I argued that accidents do happen and there's nothing to be gained by punishing the mother by forcing her to raise an unwanted child. I argued that "killing a baby" is not an entirely accurate description of a medical condition; besides, many children are emotionally "killed" by growing up resented. These logical arguments failed to take the sting out of "Abortion."

"But, Mrs. Fowler, I don't care what you say. O.K., you're right. But I'm never going to let anyone take my baby and kill it," sputtered one exasperated girl.

"Mine either," said another.

"Yeah, why should some old doctor just go around killing ladies' babies?" asked one of the boys.

Finally I understood the fear-fantasy behind many of their objections. In many of their minds, legalized abortion was equivalent to mandatory kidnapping.

"A law which allowed a woman to have an abortion whenever she wanted would be like a law which said a person could have a tooth pulled by a dentist at her (his) request. Just because there are dentists around who are qualified to pull teeth doesn't mean they're lurking on every street corner waiting to grab your teeth. It's your decision to have an abortion," I explained.

"You mean, it's like a service you can take or leave as you choose?" asked the previously exasperated girl.

"Exactly," I replied.

"Well, isn't the woman still bad if she gets an abortion?" asked her friend.

"What does 'bad' mean?" I asked.

"She did sex," she replied.

"Is sex 'bad'?" I asked.

Giggles from both sides of the room.

"Well, it's bad if the people don't know what they're doing, or if they don't care for each other . . ." said one boy.

"I agree," I said.

"And if they don't take responsibility for what can happen," said a girl.

"What kind of responsibility?" I asked.

"Well, being ready to give the child a good home, or else taking care not to get pregnant," she said.

"And if they do get pregnant, this couple . . ." I asked.

"Then they should have a chance to undo their mistake if they decide to before they have a kid they're not able to care for," she said slowly.

# PHOENIX

By LYNN MICHAELS



DRAWING BY ADELE CHATELIN

"Phoenix," she told me, "is the Garden of Eden!"

Gallup was a plot of dust with a pre-fab house on it which they had bought sight unseen from a doctor friend, and when they moved there from Boston, she wept upon looking at the house.

It turned out to be a find for Gallup, though, which was kept going only by the gas stations and bars along Route 66, for drinking was not allowed on the Navajo Reservations. Her husband, born in Ecuador, had been called to military service on his thirty-fifth birthday when he became an American citizen. He chose to be placed as doctor for the Navajos in Gallup, New Mexico. He moved his wife and three boys out.

There was nothing for her there, nothing. She bought a Russian Samoyed dog whom she named CON. She joined the Samoyed Club of America, groomed the large dog in all spare moments between cooking, cleaning, driving and picking up kids. She read up with a passion on this breed of dog.

And they went to Phoenix, Arizona, when they could afford it, once or twice a year. Blew their wad, as she put it. "I brought my frypan with me, for eating out three meals a day with three kids is hell on wheels, for the birds." The most beautiful city in the United States, she said. Wide avenues, citrus trees, you should smell the oranges there! Tennis courts all lit up at night, one played only at night, the day was scorching. And so warm, eighty-five degrees even in December. A man-made oasis, all green with wide rows of palm trees. (Once she broke her foot playing tennis and they had to return to Gallup next day.)

"I'm a dumb bunny," she told me. "Been to Quaker high school, and I've taken courses from coast to coast wherever Tom was placed. But it never amounted to much, never did get my B.A. Only my R.A. for registered nurse. When I applied here at the University of New Mexico, wanting like the dickens to build a minor in Spanish (I have a passion for languages), they gave me a tough time, thinking I was some lilly white housewife indulging herself who'd rather take courses than sit home."

"Are you into womens' lib?" I asked smiling.

"I feel those women are unhappy who complain. A woman's got to decide to give up ten, twelve, years of her personal life to be married and raise kids. I've learned every freedom carries with it its own responsibilities. After that, she has her freedom."

She ground her foot into the dust at our feet. She screamed at one of the children who was drowning his brother in the pool . . .

. . . "And the gas! The natural gas there in Gallup. They were drilling all the time; in those days, one didn't have to do this dirty business ten miles outside the city. They'd burn off the excess. At times, we thought we'd be sick from the odor . . . Next week, I'm taking off, flying to Newark International Airport with my dog, FANCY, my youngest Samoyed, showing her; she's been two months in training; now she's seven months old and doing fine. It will be the first time. Yep, I'm taking my two wigs with me and my fall I bought one time in Phoenix."

She smiled, a broad, frank smile lighting up her face; thirty-three she looked slightly older with sunbrowned skin, thin dirty

One girl's eyes lit up, "Now I get it. Women's liberation people want a chance for people — ~~one~~ married people — to be able to have ~~only~~ the kids they can really care for. It's a responsible thing they want, not irresponsible."

"That's what many women say," I said.

"I guess an abortion itself wouldn't be much fun. I ~~don't~~ if anybody would just do it for kicks," ~~used~~ another girl.

With the fear that abortion equalled kidnapping at ~~least~~ partially dispelled, we went on to discuss the religious, ethical and economic reasons for and against abortion. (Economic reasons are the ones which will probably make abortion eventually acceptable.) I said that a number of states were about to make abortion legally available to any woman who wanted to end her pregnancy for whatever reason.

Apparently, the philosophical, relaxed discussion allowed kids to think about their personal experiences. Several mentioned acquaintances who had had abortions. Then one of my quiet students began to speak.

"You know," she said, "I've never admitted it to anybody except one friend before, but a year ago (when she was 12!) I got in trouble with a boy and had an abortion. I could handle the religious thing, but being made to feel that I was like a legal criminal was almost too much."

The class was silent as she spoke. An abstract issue had become very concrete.

"We were two dumb kids. We didn't know what we were doing. He sort of talked me into it . . . Nobody, especially kids as young as I was should be forced to have a baby. I couldn't have been a mother and still have been a regular 8th grader. Abortion should be a legal choice. You shouldn't have to be so ashamed and criminal-feeling. Some kids' parents think we shouldn't talk about abortions and sex in schools, that it'll lead to trouble. Well, a lot of kids "fool around" and get into plenty of trouble that maybe they could avoid if they knew better."

"You learn a lot from your mistakes. You get plenty scared. There's no need to be called a criminal on top of all that."

The discussion that followed her sober statement was considerably more mature and thoughtful than it had been. Many kids still had strong objections to abortion but most also expressed a feeling that being called a criminal was unfair punishment for a private mistake.

In most of our talks, I am not so much a fact-dispenser as a question-poser. I consider that a large part of my job as teacher-counselor is to provide emotional support and protection for kids who do try to assert themselves in a more human, less role-confined way.

In one class, a boy began to cry when I reprimanded him for fooling. (He cried often.) The boys began jeering, "T— is a crybaby." "T— you're like a girl." "When are you gonna be a man?"

I took the opportunity to discuss with them how men's liberation groups have been forming around the country precisely to help men get in touch with feelings they learned to suppress in order to be "men." By the end of the discussion, T— seemed more relaxed and less defensive about his crying. In the same vein, several other boys gave revealing answers in a questionnaire we had a few weeks later. In answer to one question, "If women and men were already equal and "liberated," how would that change your idea of yourself?" a few boys ventured to say: "I wouldn't have to always show myself to be strong."

During every class period, there are also countless times for me to give support to a girl who is trying to perform. If I take what she has to say more seriously than the teasing she may be getting, at least I am setting an example of valuing her, her ideas and perhaps women's minds in general. Acknowledging or responding to a girl's comments is hard, though; it's easy for a teacher to not-respond if her (his) attention is forcibly distracted by the boys who are fooling or heckling.

Women's liberation issues delve deeply into personality and beliefs about oneself, about "human nature" and the good society. My adolescents — even more than adults — resist changing familiar attitudes and behaviors when this necessitates a drastic re-shuffling of values. But the time has come for such a change.

Like the first proud blacks before them, feminists are saying, "Women — we are not inferior beings, nor are we superior. We are simply human and we demand to be treated in dignity, as full and equal human beings."

It is this simple, and complicated, message which I try to get my students to understand.

*(Judy got her MA from Harvard in 1970, after three years in the Peace Corps. Married, with one child, she teaches 8th graders.)*



blonde hair shoulder length; alert black eyes, wore a sheer white lacy negligee over her old black bathing suit. She had recently joined the Weight Watchers club and had lost twenty pounds, although she was still stocky. I think she thought of herself as about as glamorous as the back-end of a bus . . .

"That's marvelous. You're flying with the dog in a crate, and staying in New Jersey?"

"Yes. After, I'll visit my parents in Boston."

I saw the Quaker woman with dog trailing the streets of Boston.

"How does Tom feel about it?"

"Fine. He'll mind the kids. They'll mind him."

"So you think they're chronic complainers, those women who agitate for more time, more freedom? Think there's a conflict between a woman's role as wife and her role as mother?"

"Could be. But our line was drawn early. Tom was critically ill the first year of our marriage; we thought he wouldn't live; believed it was cancer. It turned out the tumor could be removed and was not malignant; but it put such a scare into us, threw us together in a way we've not forgotten. Oh we have our differences — you'll see — we're about as much unsuited in many ways as can be borne. But I believe — though he might deny this — that Tom needs me, leans on me; and he's demonstrative, for him. I need him."

I found her a fascinating blend of vulnerable and commanding.

I looked for the man's coming. When he did come home, I saw the contrast instantly; in relief against this broad-boned, generous country woman, I saw a little man, spectacled, with fine shrewd mind, idealistic, critical, near-sighted: a physician. He greeted me with a shake of the hand. We chatted a few moments. Then he offered me a drink. His wife changed from her negligee to a bright orange turtleneck shirt. I saw the Quaker little girl emerge, her hair still wet, glistening, tied back with a piece of string. Her face took on a quiet expression. She was at the kitchen sink.

"Like lemon with it, Clem?" she called out to me.

"Yes, thanks," I said. The husband mixed me a gin and tonic. She slipped the lemon in.

"Not a whole hunk!" he chided his wife.

"Leave it," I laughed, "I like it." I

added under my breath, "I'm always for the woman . . ."

"Hmm?" he inquired, handing me the cool glass with an enormous chunk of hacked lemon.

"I said," still smiling, "I'm for the woman."

He pushed the dogs, the three of them — the woman's kennels the sustaining pride of her identity — out of his path as he moved about the room irritably. There was a huge picture over the fireplace of a prize winning Samoyed.

"Has Kera bored you telling you all about her dogs?"

"Not at all. I'm interested. We talked about the dogs. And other things."

For supper, she laid out a hunk of tongue she had cooked. That was it. And some brown bread.

"Did you ask Clem first whether she likes tongue? Many people do not."

"I adore tongue," I said. I saw Kera bite her lip until it drew a thin thread of ruby blood.

I caught every dart wielded toward her; deflected it into the warm dusty New Mexico sunset. She mentioned how she had bussed down from Gallup to Albuquerque to find this house for them. One weekend. Otherwise, she fell silent. By tail end of evening, did she believe I was more interested in him than her? She left for an hour to take FANCY, her pride, to a training session. I was forced to speak during that time with her husband. He seemed to warm to my courteous listening. She returned, flushed, her hair pulled out of the pony tail, her voice husky with fatigue.

"I let the rabbit out of the pen," her husband greeted her. (Black and white, this rabbit reminded me of the one in ALICE AND WONDERLAND . . .) In addition to the three Samoyeds, the woman had a male canary who sang, a black and white rabbit, a bowl of goldfish in the oldest boy's room.

The man waited till now to ask me, "How do you like our menagerie?"

"I like it fine."

"As for me, I don't like dogs. Nor young children. I waited for my boys to be old enough to play chess with me. Now they're all three fresh as paint. As for dogs, I told Kera she could have one. Then this winter, she got another, now a third. I can't move without bumping into one. And the canary, he starts singing at 4 in the morning."

"He can't understand," she finally raised her eyes from where she was tending the

rabbit, "how I need someone around here to worship me." She brushed her hands on her bare brown knees. (She was the sort of woman who would look handsome in jodhpurs; actually she wanted to live in the Rio Grande Valley where she could raise horses . . .) She rose . . .

I drew my shoulders back to try and relax them, must have closed my eyes for a split second.

"How's your back feeling?" she asked quietly, when the man had turned aside.

"Lousy," (I told the truth for once.) "I need new shoulders," I laughed.

"These work overtime. Rest, Clem," she laid her hand on my back — left it there a second longer than I expected. I felt myself flush; and now my cheeks were burning.

"Drive you home?" she said.

"I'll join you," her husband called from beside the rabbit pen, where he'd got the creature once more contained.

We three drove home. In repressed silence. Drove like a bullet through New Mexico evening. Anger was in the air, bristling like the fur on a pig's back. An ambulance sped past. Somebody's life was on the line. I felt pain score up my spine as if the strongman weight had been hit by the giant, reaching the top, ringing a bell . . .

The setting sun illumined all the dusty leaves, like an office lit gold at last hour of afternoon. God, I wanted to lay my head on her breast and cry. For her, for both of them.

"Last time we'll see rain," her husband observed, "till next August." (Christ, how I'll long for rain. Or will I?)

Once at my building, she said, "O.K., Tom, that's it; we've got to go back home; those three children are too young to be left alone at twilight."

Did she think I had been enraptured by the man's attentions? Clearly, I was bored silly by the man's tedious talk of medical cases, statistics. All I longed for was the further touch of her palm on my back.

But she was a Quaker. And definitely married. She had three kids bright as buttons, foxy, and fresh as paint. My place was as ever on the outer ring . . . Pleasing to the man, but attracted by the woman.

I thought back to what she said about Phoenix, the garden of Eden, how her eyes had brightened. The fall she'd bought there, "My hair's so thin, not like yours, Clem, lush and silky at the same time. But picturing you, just by your voice, I thought your hair would be long."

That was at the zenith of afternoon when the hot sun beat down on our backs. I pictured the phoenix rising from his ashes for a second birth. I revived in my mind that enchanted ring of honest disappointment we laid before us burning in the desert dust. She with her life, I with mine. We had danced (in our minds) like rabbits on the enchanted green.

New Mexico, "State of Enchantment" stamped beside the sunburst on every license plate, was poor, poor; one of the two states in our nation whose population is thinning (the other, Wyoming.) Gallup which she endured for five years was a plot of dust in the front yard, Albuquerque was three exquisite Russian Samoyeds. She told me — a non sequitur — "I'm on the wagon, Clem; for if I get off, I suspect I'll go on a bender."

A bender? A round curve of late afternoon clearly; yes, I'm sure I caught her. We collided. It was a matter of time, restraint, good humor.

"Oh I've already written the note," she said, "for them; when I'll wash my hands, walk out on the whole thing."

"You have? How does it run?"

"Oh, of course in my mind," She laughed, threw her head back. I could see the tears glistening. She went through the weedy backyard to get another Diet Pepsi, came back, had closed her eyes in the orange sun, one palm upturned on her sunburned knee, like the hand of her who would catch coins: of what? cool clear water? (The lakes around here are ponds, she said, and angry red with the sun; they make you hotter rather than cooler.) Palm upraised to catch . . . that which might calm the turbulent heart beating underneath? One Samoyed came up to her, nosed his soft muzzle in her lap . . .

But now was sunset. And past the setting sun. Night. We three said goodnight at the car, with hostile faces, sharp profiles. Mouths thin. Eyes averted. It was a triumvirate, a trio in darkness. But no note streamed. For each bow was held, balanced, just so above the string.



# HARPER'S WEEKLY

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WITH A SUPPLEMENT  
PAGE TEN SEVEN



JEWELS AMONG SWINE

Thomas Nast. Jewels Among Swine. 1874. Engraving.

## Journeys in Art

By SARAH WHITWORTH

To account for the dearth of representations of the feminist movement in political art of the 19th and 20th centuries, one must surely turn to the fact that the majority of artists of previous times were men. Unlike other revolutions, the concepts of feminism or the fight for women's independence has never before been considered a serious enough struggle (by artists dealing with other forms of social slavery) to be included in works of social protest.

There are a few minor exceptions which concern women's slavery indirectly such as Thomas Nast's *Jewels Among Swine* which appeared in *Harper's Weekly* in 1874. Here we see the male supremacist police force characterized ironically as pigs. The caption, which reads "The police authorities, that do not suppress gambling or houses of ill repute distinguished themselves on Saturday by arresting forty-three women, who went on the streets to sing and pray, and marching them to the station-

house," takes offense at a double standard of what is fitting for males to do and what is not fitting for females. It suggests that the police, being men, are not inclined to suppress their own vices but are more threatened by the power of a group of women who have banded together to object to these vices.

However, even in this work the feminist issue is viewed more from a religious standpoint than from a social one. The woman carrying a bible in the center of the engraving enables the work to be considered in terms of a moral ethic so that the church-going male chauvinist of the period could agree with the concepts presented without ever questioning the bondage which he had placed upon his own wife.

Now, however, there is a growing number of women who, as artists, have directed themselves in their work toward the concepts of feminism. Pat Mainardi, in addition to being a painter, is also one of



Pat Mainardi. Three Women. 1970. Oil on canvas. Collection of Susan and Martin Tepper.



Pat Mainardi. Michele. 1971. Oil on canvas. Collection of the Artist.

the editors of the *Feminist Art Journal* and has stated her views of feminist art in the April, 1972 edition of the *Journal*. "Feminist art is different from feminine sensibility. Feminist art is political propaganda art which like all political art, should owe its first allegiance to the political movement whose ideology it shares, and not the museum and gallery artworld system. Since feminism is a political position (the economic, political and social equality of women and men) and feminist art reflects those politics it could even be made by men, although it is unlikely that at this point men's politics will be up to it."

Mainardi's paintings reflect this attitude first in style which goes its own personal way and does not attempt to ally itself with a predominant male artist movement or with the easy to paint easy to sell techniques that are being pushed upon the art consumer by the larger galleries. In addition, her subject matter, which is here only represented by her feminist work also includes statements on political questions such as the events at Attica, the trial of Angela Davis and the deterioration of our trash-ridden landscape. She has, therefore,

devoted herself to a broad scope of the political environment in which she lives thereby evolving her paintings concerning feminism from a multi-focused perspective.

*Three Women* is a presentation of the heritage of a contemporary woman. The Japanese print in the background expresses the height of women's traditional role of bondage. The sculpture in the foreground of a strong and mature woman is a reminder of those women in the past who have maintained their independence of this bondage. And, the mirror reflection in the center, probably of the artist herself, is a woman living in the current world who finds herself in a society which reflects both these traditions.

The objects placed around the three women function in artistic terms to give the painting a most superb balance and formal structure but they also add to the content. The jug which is old and traditional is nevertheless still beautiful and useful. The steer skull, on the other hand, is the discarded and obsolete remains of what was once alive but no longer is and the fruit and plants, which are living things, embody the possibilities of recurring growth. When seen



Pat Mainardi. Copy, Titian: Venus and the Lute Player. 1968. Oil on canvas. Collection of the Artist.



together, the mixture of the three women and the objects around them express a potential of the contemporary woman in regard to her growth and strength as well as an acknowledgement of the pressures of our society against her which must still be overcome.

In the cover painting, entitled *Looking Glass*, the artist chooses again to include herself as a mirror reflection. But, in this case, the egg or oval shaped mirror also serves to encircle the forces of Mainardi's world including an easel, to mark her creative identity, an upside-down flag, alluding to her disagreement with American politics, a column, which gives the feeling of self or outside support and a second obscure self reflection juxtaposed with a feminist symbol.

It is the second reflection of the artist which gives validity to the painting in terms of its content. The features of the face are in shadow and not delineated; it is set far back in the painting out of reach so that the viewer has trouble keeping the face in focus without the eye wandering to the rest of the portrait. This is the self that remains unknown, always just slightly out of touch with our conscious judgements and motivations. It is the self that Mainardi aligns with the feminist symbol, indicating that the sources of her feminism, which are not at all times clear to her conscious mind are

deeply rooted and do not stem merely from the carrying of a banner.

*Michele* and *Copy Titian Venus and the Lute Player* concern themselves with the issue of the female stereotype in art. *Michele* presents the female being as an individual first and only secondarily as a woman. This is a painting of a person named Michele not of an anonymous model. A similar work by an anti-feminist would be more likely titled *Girl Reading* or *Model Reclining on a Couch* and would render Michele if not in a wholly seductive manner at least in a far less introspective one.

The epitome of rendering women in art as inanimate, depersonalized objects can be seen in Titian's *Venus and the Lute Player*, a painting already discussed in this column in "Foundations of the Male-Chauvinist-Nude", April/May 1971, Volume 15 No. 7 & 8. Mainardi's spoof of this work strips the original painting of its virtuosity of technique in order to expose the sexism of its subject matter. Since the viewer can no longer be sidetracked by the subtleties of Titian's palette or the deftness of his brushstroke, there is nothing more to do but look aghast at a woman being sexually objectified in a manner which no male body would ever be portrayed in art.

The parodying of traditional sexist themes in art is the basis of Janet Sawyer's

trilogy, *Confrontation*, *Expulsion*, *Creation*. The story of Adam and Eve, being one of the most male-chauvinist concepts in Judeo-Christian thought, is likewise one of the most disparagingly anti-female conceptions in Western Art. Eve, the first woman, is seen as the cause of the male downfall and the reason for his expulsion from a life of happiness in Eden. In art, Eve is the seductress who tempts humanity (that is, males) to their destruction; she must, therefore, be imprisoned in every way possible to prevent her from playing her part. To understand fully the implications of the story of Adam and Eve, the second and third chapters of Genesis must be reviewed. The tree from which Eve ate was the tree of (sexual) knowledge; her curiosity to gain this knowledge was punished because she defied male authority, or a male god's authority, and her sentence for this crime was stated by this male god implicitly: "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband who shall rule over thee."

Eve's punishment, therefore, was twofold for she must not only be the sex which bore children, she must now do this painfully and above all she must at all times be ruled by and obey males. Women who have not questioned Judeo-Christian thought are



Masaccio. *The Expulsion from Paradise*. c. 1427. Fresco. Brancacci Chapel, Sta. Maria del Carmine, Florence.



Janet Sawyer. *Confrontation*. 1971. Oil on canvas. Collection of the Artist.



Janet Sawyer. *Expulsion*. 1972. Oil on canvas. Collection of the Artist.



Janet Sawyer. Creation. 1972. Oil on canvas. Collection of the Artist.

led by this image of Adam and Eve's destruction to the fear of defying male authority — the idea being that further defiance will bring even more unhappiness.

Janet Sawyer's triptych contests this misconception and rewrites the story of Adam and Eve. In *Confrontation*, it is the male who takes away the happiness of women by attempting to withhold their freedom but Eve is persuaded by another woman not to be deceived or mesmerized by male power. With renewed hope the women join together in the second panel, *Expulsion*, and Adam is shamed for his acts of domination of women and banished from their company. (The male figure in this panel is based upon Masaccio's *Expulsion from Paradise*.) The final scene, *Creation*, concludes the allegory with the formation of a new Eden in which women are free from male supremacy and are self-determining human beings.

The secondary symbolism of the three panels is manifested by the landscape, the dove and the children. The flowers and peacefully grazing animals of the first panel imply the complacency of established male-supremacist conditions just preceding Eve's confrontation with these values. During the expulsion of Adam, the ground changes to a dangerous array of sharp pointed shells and crustacea while a dark and brooding sky moves in overhead. The sky clears in the final panel and the earth which had only yielded a field of superficial flowers now brings forth a more essential growth of edible vegetables.

The dove, of course, represents peace and freedom and is easily understood. However, the children are a more subtle inclusion. The young girl in *Confrontation* supports the older woman who is attempting to persuade Eve to defy the male. The young boys, on the other hand, are frightened and cry out in an effort to prevent this interference which would eventually remove their inheritance of male supremacy. In *Expulsion*, one of the boys imitates his sister and points along with her the way to a freer life while the second boy must still be carried. And, finally, in *Creation*, the male children are being taught a new understanding in a world in which along with their sisters, they will inherit not male supremacy but a position of equality for women and men both.

*Confrontation*, *Expulsion* and *Creation* are feminist paintings which derive from the

artist's dreams and unconscious fears. Though no less feminist, they are different in impulse from Pat Mainardi's work which "owes its first allegiance to the political movement." The impulse which directs Janet Sawyer to the canvas is an attempt at personal revelation rather than political revelation. But both artists are women of a new era who have found that art like every other form of communication has been a vehicle of women's suppression and have attempted through their own work to make it possible for us (as stated by Janet Sawyer) to "gain knowledge of what it REALLY means to be a woman. To know ourselves totally from the outside in, rather than from the outside-out. To understand our biology, and with this knowledge change our destiny and make it right."



Designs

Stumbling across the folds of myself,  
in the drapery that you are,  
I ran through the patterns,  
the near balanced designs  
so close to reflection,  
I lost you, lost me, in the maze  
of our images of each other.  
Two bolts of cloth set wild,  
our spirits unrolled to a V,  
and you, and me, crashed  
in a clash of colors and unfurled  
patterns, tumbling around  
our unwound souls.  
Caught in those sacred gymnastics,  
I struggled, you struggled  
to roll further, to gather  
that let out together and pull  
it beyond one another's grasp,  
rewind it all about ourselves  
to set it still again.  
We wait for form now, potent  
with color's excitement, tension's  
design, you wait, I wait,  
all tightly rolled on our cores  
for the cutting of others' intentions,  
afraid to design ourselves.

Beverly Lynch

A celebratory ~~city~~.  
 In downtown ~~Pittsburgh~~  
 the men of ~~Pittsburgh~~  
 in honor of ~~those players~~  
 to celebrate ~~their team's~~  
 their team's  
 the big series ~~victory~~  
 in order to ~~honor~~  
 those men of ~~baseball~~  
 in downtown ~~Pittsburgh~~  
 the men of ~~Pittsburgh~~  
 in a gesture of ~~joyous~~  
 unrestraint  
 in order to ~~honor~~  
 those players of ~~whom~~  
 it is said  
 according  
 according to  
 according to ~~reports~~  
 now under investigation  
 of the use of  
 whose muscles ~~are swollen~~ but  
 whose genitals ~~are~~  
 according to all ~~recent~~ reports  
 adversely affected  
 from the use of ~~steroids~~  
 in fact  
 atrophied  
 it is said  
 by some ~~journalists~~  
 the men of ~~Pittsburgh~~  
 after the big series ~~game~~  
 according to ~~newspaper~~ accounts  
 in downtown ~~Pittsburgh~~  
 drug her from a ~~car~~  
 raped a girl  
 while others ~~looked on~~  
 immediately but ~~not~~ preceding  
 but following ~~immediately~~ after  
 the series victory  
 in downtown ~~Pittsburgh~~  
 as I understand it  
 from newspaper ~~accounts~~  
 the fans went ~~wild~~  
 drug her from a ~~car~~  
 a female passerby  
 they the fans all ~~they~~ all  
 went wild in ~~downtown~~ Pittsburgh  
 following the ~~decisive~~ game  
 as I understand it ~~from~~ newspaper accounts  
 as I understand it  
 the rights of the  
 fetus thus conceived  
 are inviolable  
 in downtown ~~Pittsburgh~~.

# Three Poems

By MICKIE BURNS

## TYPING EXERCISE

The quick red fox jumped over the lazy red hen.  
 The quick red fox jumped over the lazy red hen.  
 The quick red fox jumped over the lazy red hen.  
 The quick red fox jumped over the lazy red hen.  
 The quick red fox jumped over the lazy red hen.  
 The quick red fox jumped over the lazy red hen.  
 The gobbledy/gurwok/ugh/ulp/ugh/ulp/gobbledy/gurwok  
 The hen ate up the fox.

## Hard Dames

Two years ago  
 She worked in a massage parlor  
 In Topeka,  
 And you know what that means.

Two years ago about that time  
 I clerked  
 On Fifth Avenue.  
 And you know what that means.

But last week  
 Suddenly we had the nerve to hold hands  
 for a  
 One hundred and sixty-five seconds' worth  
 Warm electrocution.

# ME, A LESBIAN?

By BETSY JANE

Me, a lesbian? I was appalled two years ago when I heard other women in Women's Liberation talking about Lesbianism as a possible alternative to having to depend on men for intimacy and emotional support. I laughed at the very idea one year ago when a close woman friend described her experience with a lesbian relationship in college. I listened, but as though to a visitor from another planet. None of that for me, sister! "I'm as heterosexual as they come: the polarity between male and female is crucial to me in a sexual relationship." And I didn't mean sex role polarity; dominant male/passive female — for that stuff had always been oppressive to me and I was deeply involved in Women's Liberation as a way of struggling against and overthrowing male supremacy. I meant sheer biological polarity — not just genital sex — but the way it is when you dig a man's body and he digs yours, and there is an incredible otherness; the mystery of being so different and yet sharing together. I just couldn't imagine making love with a woman, and wasn't interested in coaching my imagination to do so.

One month later, I had fallen in love with another woman and visited that strange planet myself. The planet metaphor may seem strained, but it's one of the few images that works at all to suggest what a remarkable, altogether new experience it's been (and still is) to be in love with a woman who loves me as deeply and truly as I love her. I suppose I was scared and uptight at first as Linda began to discover with me what our feelings for each other were; but whatever anxieties I had were minor compared to the overwhelming sense that I was moving into something that was natural, healthy and more beautifully real than anything I had experienced with men. The story of my experiences with men is probably like many you've heard before, maybe like one you yourself could tell. There had been the usual amount of hanky-panky in high school and college, and the usual things had gone on in back seats of cars and in motel rooms. Nothing especially vicious had happened to me in those casual relationships; nothing especially human either; just the "normal" stuff of being with guys interested in a good lay and

being uneasy because, for all that I enjoyed the sex of it at a certain level, I knew I was being used, I felt guilty, and I wished for love instead.

There were also some Great Loves. And it was clear to me that I was still single at age 28 because the men who had loved me had been too committed to a male supremacist view of the universe to be committed to a strong, articulate, reasonably creative woman who had work of her own to do in the world and who would want to do something else with her life besides wash dishes and nurture a male ego. The Women's Liberation Movement was a natural for me; finally I could come out of the closet of private feminist anger.

Talk about sisterhood turned me off, though, during the first months of contact with Women's Liberation. For one thing, I didn't want to be in a "woman only" organization; I was looking for a man, see, and I didn't want to spend much time with another bunch of females. I was angry at men, sure; but the awful truth was that I didn't like women. Not as a group. Women are so flighty, so incompetent, so dull, etc. Of course, most of us are well-trained to be that way, and the rest of us are well-trained to be contemptuous of the others. Coming to realize why I was so alienated from most females was one of the heaviest discoveries I've ever made; contempt for womankind was just another shuck that male supremacy had put over on me. I had believed that men were where it's at because that's what men need to believe of themselves, and my disdain for women was an infection that we naturally pick up in a male-controlled, male-dominated culture. Seeing myself as a lackey of male chauvinism made me angry enough to take the plunge into Women's Liberation and to decide that — dammit! — I was going to learn to like women no matter how hard it was. And, of course, it wasn't hard at all, and there was nothing I had to do to "learn" about liking women. When there's unfettered room for women together — that is, when our minds aren't befuddled by competing with each other for male approval and by being preoccupied with men — sisterhood can really happen. I discovered that women are groovy, strong, joyous, compassionate. I discovered the



mind-blowing secret which has been so elaborately and carefully hidden from us: that we women ~~can't~~ really need men, that we can do quite well — better, in fact — without them.

I continued to assume that we do need men sexually, and to hope that the yet-empty space in my life would be filled by love for and from a man. But that space gradually became smaller, the more rich and full my life became as I grew close to women in WLM. We had discussions about whether we needed men for anything at all; about how little hope we had that men would change and how little sense it made to continue to attempt love with our oppressors; about how strange it was to have to put brakes on our affection for each other as women and how much more whole life would be if we were free to express our love for women sexually.

By the time I was seriously involved in those conversations, they had become serious for me because of my feelings for Linda. We were lucky — not only because our feelings were shared and our love mutual — but also because we were brought together in a context where women were struggling together to imagine what it would be like if we were really free. Imagine! If we were really free . . .

That context made us free enough — despite the repressive America we live in — to enter into a relationship which had no brakes on it. As I think back, to high school and college, I can only wonder what it would have been like with my close women friends if there'd been a women's movement then to set our imaginations free. But we didn't dream of talking about Lesbianism and its possibilities; we were too damn busy talking to and about men.

To my straight sisters in WLM: when you talk about Lesbianism with open minds and hearts open to each other, know just talking about it sets up a context of new possibilities among you. Sexual dynamics always go on among women; Lesbianism is, in a way, simply noticing what otherwise goes unnoticed. Those of you who are open to such new possibilities may be in a painful place. Especially if you have special feelings for someone and don't know what to do with them. It can also be painful to know that you have had it with men and that, if you are to have lovers at all, they will be women; only it's one thing for that knowledge to be in your head, another for it to be in your experience. And in either

case, you are probably scared. I'm sharing my experience in order to say that, in my experience, actual sex with an actual woman was less scary and less alienating than anything I've ever known with a man. Another recently-become-gay sister says it like this: my heart was with my mind was with my body.

I'm not trying to say categorically that sex between women is automatically more fulfilling than sex between men and women (although I believe that to be generally true). I just speak as someone whose sexuality had been exclusively male-oriented and who discovered that the hangups and revulsions I'd associated with Lesbianism utterly vanished for me when I became one of two women actually, physically loving each other. There was a primitive level of trust that the very otherness between man and woman surely prevents; and yet there is so much otherness — a body so like mine yet different; the radical mystery that depends, not on being male and female together, but on being person and other person intimately together. The wonder is ultimate human love — never mind whether biology is heterosexual.

Of course, I do mind, because I continue to see sisters of mine agonized by impossible relationships with men or by longing for possible men or by struggling to make their men more possible. These words are an attempt to say to those of you who weary of those efforts: take heart — there are other options. Love and equality can, in fact, dwell in the same house. And Sisterhood is more powerful than most of us have ever dreamed.

(Reprinted from the January 13-January 20, 1972, issue of VANCOUR FREE PRESS.)



HOW COME A NICE GIRL LIKE ME ISN'T MARRIED? JUST LUCKY, I GUESS.

## Hanna's Old Love

By CAROL MORAN

The charm of her medieval face was dispelled by its erratic laughter. She sat at the far end of the table and disregarding the Surgeon General's warning endowed our hostess with coughing spasms and champagne glasses filled with cigarette butts. Swirling ghosts escaped through the failure of her finger painted full lips. She was caught in the thicket of a conversation for pretending to have ears. A raven grew under her dying swan hair bound by a plaid shoe lace at the nape of the neck. I loved her immediately, having a propensity for hodge-podge women and who the hell is the Surgeon General anyway.

"That's her alright." The sputtering of my friend's amazement repeated in my ear, "That's her alright, Hanna's old love."

"Who's Hanna?" I asked. My friend ignored me as we approached Hanna's old love in single file, limiting our gestures to the propriety of our words. It was obvious that Hanna's old love had only recently relinquished the title of Hanna's love, the bruises were still in her eyes. After some tactful interrogation, Hanna's old love told us she was an artist, letting each word exhale as a separate creation. My friend told her that she was a pianist. Hanna's old love was so pleased, she blew a perfect smoke ring.

"And you?" she asked.

I shuffled my feet and with the agility of a wooden soldier, pirouetted.

"Oh, a prima donna," she laughed and blew an artless smoke ring as she led my friend away to dance.

Left in the throes of rejection I tried to think of something profound to say to Hanna's old love. Her smoke rings were fading fast. I followed one as it darted back and forth above my head. Someone mistook my pacing for natural rhythm and asked me to dance. All at once Hanna's old love was sending the most exquisite smoke rings my way, and beaming like an October moon. As my dancing grew more expressive my partner laughed and asked my name. I sang it with the music and asked, "What's yours?"

"Hanna," she said.



By now you've read the editorial that leads this issue and know that this is the last column, last appearance of the oldest feature of the magazine. There is always too much to cover and I am always too many books behind, but this time I cannot promise to tell you about them in the future, so I will simply include every book I now have on hand at the end of the column or along the way when it seems realistic that I will have no chance of completing reviewing of the title. This will allow you to find the books if you are interested, and if you get misled, forgive me, and put it in the lap of some reviewer before me that led me to the book.

A few years ago we covered the works of May Sarton at length, since most of her poetry and several of her novels are of interest to the Lesbian reading audience though not, per se, to the feminist audience at large. Now, nearing 60, Ms. Sarton has published her 10th collection of poetry, A DURABLE FIRE, N.Y., Norton, 1972. It is one of her best, perhaps the best of all, though I'll personally stick to her earlier, CLOUD, STONE, SUN, VINE (N.Y., Norton, 1960). Most libraries will have fairly complete Sarton collections and she's worth your time and trouble to go look.

Probably everyone has been to get John O'Hara's THE EWINGS, N.Y., Random House, 1972, if they are going to bother at all, but we will add that this is major Lesbian, and typical O'Hara otherwise.

Iris Murdoch is a special taste and those of you who relish her finely crafted fiction will probably already have seen AN ACCIDENTAL MAN, N.Y., Viking, 1971, but if not, try it. Among the characters is a Lesbian pair, whose separation and reconciliation is very well and sympathetically handled. Nice.

Mostly we are puzzled by Beatrice Lillie's autobiography, EVERY OTHER INCH A LADY, Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, 1972, for its utter lack of pertinent commentary. Those of you old enough to know her stage work from the 30's and even before simply must not miss reading

this, but unless you are very well versed about who was who and with whom, it's going to be hard going.

It is very difficult to review THE GAY CRUSADERS, edited and compiled by Kay Tobin and Randy Wicker, Paperback Library, 1972. Fifteen women and men prominent in the gay movement are included. One pair of women is counted as a single entry. Only 4 of the 15 are women: Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon (founders of the Daughters of Bilitis in 1955 in San Francisco and thus, founders of this magazine in October, 1956); Barbara Gittings, editor of THE LADDER for 3 years; and Ruth Simpson, a woman whose tenure in the N.Y. Chapter of DOB was well under one calendar year in length. There is no question that Del and Phyl and Barbara Gittings well deserve their places in this book, but one might legitimately question Ruth Simpson's inclusion with perhaps 50 other women better qualified. The personal lives (to some extent) of the crusaders is dealt with, and the interviews are well-handled and interesting. The disaffection between male homosexuals and Lesbians is soft-pedaled to such an extent that one might imagine the two groups worked together congenially, which isn't and hasn't been so in some years. Probably worth reading if you are curious and \$1.25 is no major expense.

The Lesbian newspaper that began life as MOTHER, and changed its name to PROUD WOMAN after a single issue in the new format, due to lack of money. In its place is NEW LESBIAN INFORMATION SERVICE, a monthly 8-page newsletter, modeled after SPOKES-WOMAN, but limited to Lesbian-oriented feminist news. Volume 1, Number 1, May, 1972, just came out. Cost is \$12 per year which is about two times too high for its contents, but it's well edited. Write Box 15368, San Francisco, California, 94115, if you are interested.

SPECTRE, a radical Lesbian newspaper that published about 5 or 6 issues during 1971, has ceased publication. The two young women publishing it have decided to devote themselves to more political activities.

Jeannette Foster, in SEX VARIANT WOMEN IN LITERATURE, was unable to find proof of George Sand's Lesbianism, simply because she did not have access to any positive reliable material. A new biography by Samuel Edwards, GEORGE

SAND, N.Y., David McKay, 1972, now offers fairly substantial proof of her relationships with Marie Dorval and Adah Isaacs Menken. Naturally since women are defined always by their relationships with men, her affairs with two effete young men, Alfred de Musset and Frederick Chopin are common knowledge.

THE AMERICAN SISTERHOOD, edited by Wendy Martin, N.Y., Harper and Row, 1972, is a competent and very routine collection of writings on women, by women, from the past feminist movement and some current overly anthologized pieces. The bibliography is woefully inadequate and so badly out of date that we suspect this book was in the publisher's pot a long time before coming out. Will be used, we would guess, in schools, and it's fine there.

Penelope Mortimer, who will be remembered for THE PUMPKIN EATER, is said to have included Lesbians and male homosexual characters in her new novel, THE HOME, N.Y., Random House, 1971, 1972. It's clear we won't have this checked out before this issue goes to press, so go find it yourself. Most libraries of any size will carry her works.

Lesbian mysteries are no longer unusual. In fact, I am extremely sure I've missed many of them the past several years, not having had the time to read 30-40 of them each month routinely to avoid just that sort of omission. It's a pleasure to report that Richard Martin Stern's YOU DON'T NEED AN ENEMY, N.Y., Scribner's, 1972, is quite substantially Lesbian, though it is simply a part of the story and not relevant to the murders in the story. The Southwest setting is different enough to lend an extra élan. A Canadian reader did me a great kindness in introducing me to the work of Patricia Moyes, in particular her title, MANY DEADLY RETURNS, N.Y., Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1970, (originally published in England as WHO SAW HER DIE?, London, Collins, 1970, and also available in Canadian paperback, Fontana, 1971). It's enough to say about this that its relevance is so major that to tell you anything about it would be to spoil your fun . . . not to miss. Also, unless I guess very wrong, most of you will want to read the rest of her works featuring the same detective.

LILACS OUT OF A DEAD LAND, by Rachel Billington, N.Y., Saturday Review Press, 1972, was certainly not intended by its hyper-sensitive author to be a women's

liberation title, but in an odd sense it must be so considered. Narrator April is involved with a much older, married man, Lawrence, and the novel is set in Sicily to which they have journeyed after beginning their affair in London. Lawrence, a largely oppressive and very overbearing male, deprives April of anything resembling a sense of identity and the journey intensifies this reaction. After being seduced by a former mistress of Lawrence, April takes off for parts unknown, to return a few days later with sufficient sense and balance to literally kick Lawrence off a cliff. Marvelous novel in terms of dealing with an ugly situation, but the occasionally cutesy writing style detracts from the message.

LOVE SONGS by Lawrence Sanders, N.Y., Putnam, 1972, is a not-too-surprising effort from the author of THE ANDERSON TAPES. The latter, while not pertinent, was a very entertaining way of viewing the hysteria of mass surveillance under which we all now live. Along the way most human foibles were viewed, and LOVE SONGS is a combination of THE LONG, HOT SUMMER and EROS RE-VISITED. Back to her small town Maine home goes Bobbie Vander, accompanied by her accompanist, for she is a pop singer whose life style has led to pills and boredom (no, it is NOT a roman a clef on Joplin). Life in South Canaan, Maine (read PEYTON PLACE) doesn't need Bobbie back really, especially her fat, alcoholic sister, Julie, whose ties to Bobbie are essentially Lesbian. Entertaining hammock reading. Pun intended.

After all these years of taking Marijane Meaker to pieces (mostly under her infamous pseudonyms, Ann Aldrich and Vin Packer), I am forced to give her novel, SHOCKPROOF SYDNEY SKATE, Boston, Little, Brown, 1972, a rave notice. It is a very funny book, and worth the \$5.95 price tag (remember when hardcover novels never cost over \$3.95 and that was considered outrageous?). Sydney Skate is 17, and he is shockproof to the extent that jello can so be considered, but then, he does have problems. His mother is a Manhattan casting director, a Lesbian, and very very cool. His girl friend shows signs of preferring "Old Ma" to him, and on this new twist on an ancient dirty joke hangs the tale. There is room for quibbling. Meaker's years as a hack show up in the occasional brittle overworking of the humor, but most of the laughs are genuine and if you can

hang disbelief up for the necessary reading hours, this is a fun book.

An Englishwoman named Dora Jessie Saint has been successfully turning out simple, quiet, warm novels about English village life for many years, using the pseudonym, "Miss Read". Her latest novel, EMILY DAVIS, Boston, Houghton-Mifflin, 1972, will probably please most long-time readers and totally bore the younger readers. We never know to what degree any writer is aware of the inclusion of covert Lesbianism. This was especially true a few years back when one could allow for psychological innocence. I rather doubt if "Miss Read" though, was unaware of where her plot was veering in undertaking a book about lifelong friends, Dolly Clare and Emily Davis, schoolteachers who have lived all their lives together. In fact, we suspect Miss Read of some helpful amelioration in including an unlikely bit about two World War I lovers (one not to return, one to return married) lost, alas, to the ladies. Having swallowed that convention-oriented pill, the rest of the book is wonderful fun . . . you can see the sunlight through the leaves, hear the quiet droning of insects and relish all of it including the endpaper illustration of two dear old ladies (one quite butch, the other clearly femme) walking through a wooded field.

Back in 1959, one of the best Lesbian novels was Marjorie Lee's first book, THE LION HOUSE. It's as good today as it was then, and those of you with access to larger libraries might look into it. Her latest book, DR. BLOCK AND THE HUMAN CONDITION, N.Y., Putnam, 1972, is a satirical look at the psychiatric in-group. Dr. Norman Block believes in Freud and "normal" and that's where all the troubles begin as he tries to impose his beliefs on a series of resisting patients and his biggest resister, his wife Ethel. In vignettes and playbacks we learn of his attempts to "cure" his happy happy Lesbian patient of her Lesbianism (she has come to him only because of unusual fatigue, easily self-cured by a job change); his "cure" of a male homosexual (he becomes a heroin addict instead, but he's surely cured, no longer homosexual!!!) and his convincing a quiet mild-mannered man that his wife is a man-eater until the mild-mannered one finally divorces his wife, only to discover he cannot live without her so he commits suicide. Ethel, his sexually unhappy wife, irritates him and always has. He has made



the error of suggesting psychiatric care to her too but she goes to a woman psychiatrist, goes back to school, gets a doctorate and outshines him in her profession. She also buys a vibrator, sleeps with one of Dr. Block's patients and then takes on Marcia, local women's liberation leader. It's played for laughter, but the message comes through loud and clear . . . marriage as it now exists is set up for male convenience and psychiatrists act as enforcers . . . mental police.

The child's eye view of the world is a favorite device in recording Lesbian tales, and one of the best in years just appeared in Elizabeth Taylor's collection of short stories, *THE DEVASTATING BOYS AND OTHER STORIES*, N.Y., Viking, 1972. Titled simply, "Miss A. and Miss M.," this recounts the warring and cruel Miss A's deserting of Miss M. all set in a pastoral

English countryside summer scene with the watching eyes of the then teenage writer recording. We are never told, in any way, that this is the upsetting of a long-lived Lesbian marriage, but it is all there, and very very well done.

Lastly, two titles we won't get in time to review for you. *THE YELLOW SUMMER* by Suzanne Prou, N.Y., Harper and Row, 1972, is sure to be pertinent and probably intelligent reading. Her earlier *MILLE SAVELLI?* was a weird mystery novel of sorts and *THE YELLOW SUMMER* probably qualifies as close to the genre. The other title is *RUN/RIDE*, by Kip Crosby, N.Y., Crossman, 1972. This is a first novel and it deals with current young people, including young butch Angie and her high school girlfriend, Diana. It sounds like it will be very good, though certainly not a happy novel.

## Two Poems

By MARGARET CLAIRE

I threw the ~~line~~ and landed in  
The second ~~square~~,  
A minifur progression  
(I could not ~~say~~, of course)  
But I was ~~happy~~ there.

I put a ~~✓~~ up on the form inside  
The second ~~square~~.  
I signed my ~~name~~ and number.  
I paid my ~~fare~~.

My friend ~~was~~ waiting for me near  
The Second ~~Square~~.  
He held my ~~hand~~.  
I took his ~~hand~~.  
We walked ~~along~~.  
I tried to ~~care~~.

Corners, angles, turns about  
Wherever I ~~might~~ be,  
Love and faith (and always doubt)  
Discordant ~~geometry~~.

I spoke of ~~love~~ and duty  
With the second ~~square~~.  
Who else was ~~there~~ to listen?  
To whom ~~else~~ could I dare?

You really get to me  
sitting there, deep in thought,  
wrinkle-browed, alone,  
your fingers skipping down a page,  
drumming on the desk;  
or hurrying back and forth —  
your strong, gentle walk.  
maybe you are coming my way.

You really get to me  
with quiet words and easy reason  
that I close around  
until they sound within;  
sad silence that I translate  
and also know;  
or laughter ringing 'round the room,  
carrying you and me away,  
postponing everything but us.

When we are together  
close and open,  
you really get to me.

## PRATT: A FOUR-SYLLABLE WORD MEANING NOTHING

By MICKIE BURNS

One of the three or four girls in the class produced a Ravi Shankar album and after being excused to go out with one of the boys in the class who was supposed to help her carry it she returned with a malfunctioning stereo portable. Then she put on the record.

Two other kids brought in some paintings which they said they had done expressly for the class and which of course were not done expressly by themselves and which if they were done by the student purporting to have done them, were not done for the class in question. Then the paintings were discussed and elaborated upon.

One boy did what he called a mixed-media presentation consisting of himself making oinking noises and reciting protest slogans into a truly magnificent cassette outfit. At first I didn't get what the other media were since all he seemed to have going for him was the tape recorder. Even with his quite expensive machine the student still managed lots of inaudible, garbled, incomprehensible and technically shoddy abstract effects. Then he explained that the other media was poetry, that some of that that didn't come out too good was his very own poetry that he had made up himself.

The girl with the Ravi Shankar records had also brought a gallon of Gallo. The professor said something polite about the art of wine-making and tasting although Gallo wine seemed to me pathetically slender prompting. The professor seemed to be doing his best to suggest to the girl student some conceivable excuse for its function as the other half of the girl's thesis project, Ravi Shankar taking up the balance of the first half. The professor's little attempt at a critical exchange was something of a washout as it soon became apparent that the student didn't know a sherry from a chablis. Rather shamefacedly the professor dropped even that small gambit, that scruffy tidbit of knowledge-dispersing, so as not to embarrass anyone further. He needn't have bothered, for his insolent class continued uninterrupted in their omniscient ignorance, — shameless — sublime. In an attitude of supplication, the

professor made a joke about sex. Everybody liked that. Right on. The professor again enjoyed the capricious good graces of his pupils. No more bourgeois nonsense. He seemed to genuflect mentally.

Still another fellow turned in his minimal-art interpretation of a thesis project in the form of Xerox copies of about 50 New Yorker cartoons, not particularly centered up or having any apparent purpose or connection. Toward the end, one male student showed what he called a "film". It was of last year's class party. It was out of focus. It was a home movie.

Finally nearly everyone had presented their thesis projects for the Fall, 1971, semester in Advanced Sociology at Pratt University located in Brooklyn, New York City.

It was the first time I had spent time on a New York campus since I had been a student at Columbia during the campus revolt of 1968-69. It proved to be a first glimpse of campuses after the revolution. From what I have seen since, that evening at Pratt was not atypical of post-revolutionary campuses. Everyone who attended that session just described received an "A" or a "B", my friend informed me later, according to the grades posted on the bulletin board at the school. Nowadays Pratt seems a kiddie paradise where everyone can have nothing but candy to eat and after that play *LORD OF THE FLIES*. No more teachers. No more books.

The friend who had brought me to the class was my lover, Adele; Adele had looked about her and had decided early in the semester that she too might as well not bother either. "I have a full-time job", she said, "and what the hell. I just need the credit to get out this time. I don't care anymore." She seemed to differ from her classmates in that she admitted to being a cop-out and she had in years past actually done serious study. Pratt has been one of the most excellent schools of its kind in the United States. Even its yearbook was dazzling, student designed, and one of the most splendid pieces of graphic I have ever seen. It was so good that one marvelled how someone at the undergraduate or even graduate level came by the technical know-



how, much less the imagination and wit, to do it.

Since the final class of the semester was to be held in the coming, Adele had asked me to accompany her. It is a fast-disappearing security, but in certain parts of the city two persons are still somewhat safer than one. Pratt and its environs, the geographical ambience as it were, resembles a situation in which Sir Thomas More has taken up lodgings with a fraternity of Attica inmates. Pratt parks medieval metaphysics next to stolen Cadillacs which seem to function as the garbage receptacles of ghetto communities. The S.D.S. wasn't kidding when they said the University didn't relate to the neighborhood. Pratt was incongruous before. Now it is more on a level with the rest of the community.

For Adele, being an art student has become a total drag. I remembered a couple of years ago when I could stay up all night in a lab or school building and go out at any hour for coffee or pizza when I took a break. I could leave my supplies in the studio when I was working on a big project. I was as free to commute between classroom and living quarters as it is for some people to walk from their bedrooms to their kitchens. Poor Adele tries so hard to look tough on the streets but the best she can manage is "baby lutch". She looks like a twelve-year-old boy and they are getting to be about as safe on this city's streets as women. Adele speaks as though her mouth is full of cotton candy and somewhat resembles a vanilla pudding in drag. That's how effective she is. In other words, she had the misfortune to have been born with a body male instinct wants to tear limb from limb.

The professor was hip. The kids related well to him. He had a dialogue with them. He kept his job.

Everyone had tuned in something except one kid. The professor asked very meekly if he would at least write up his idea. "Just so I can have something to grade ha-ha the establishment prevails you know". The kid asked if he could drop his idea off maybe at the professor's office sometime. The professor said yes, just write up a little something on an index card and try and get it in sometime tomorrow because the grades were due at the registrar's office the next day. The kid said he was going to be pretty busy tomorrow.

The professor was hip. The kids related

well to him. He had a dialogue with them. He kept his job.

Adele had been one of the students who brought art work. She told me later the actual text of the assignment had been, "Do anything you want and tell how it relates to Sociology". In other words - do anything you want. Adele had brought two of her paintings of women. One was of two women without clothes and the other was of two women playing violins together. Everyone was making sort of nowhere comments about them because the connection between Adele's project was as vague and nonspecific as everyone else's. The Ravi Shankar chick took it upon herself to liven up the discussion. She had been scooting her chair over next to the not-even-an-index-card boy so she could flirt with him by means of entangling her legs in the rungs of his chair. He was not responding to her advances very well. "Why do your paintings exclude men?" she asked Adele. Seems the girl had noticed in earlier instances in the semester Adele was apt to take the feminist view. She was taking this opportunity to point out to Adele the great defect in that philosophy. This argument put her in the amusing position of defending the existence of men who, like the one she was flirting with, were doing their best to deny her existence and wishing she would bug off if not disappear. Poor girl, making sure to include men at every turn while they were equally busy trying to exclude her. Poor girl, with her giggling artsy-craftsy-funky affectations and contrivances. You see, she was not the sort of girl men generally treat with very much attention or respect, mainly because she wasn't very pretty. It is a singularly idiotic habit in certain ugly women to always be the first to jump up in defense of men. What do they think they are going to get out of it? Human kindness? Romance? What?

I must interject here that no one in the class including the Ravi Shankar girl seemed to catch on to the slightly blatant sapphic overtones of Adele's paintings, although everyone seemed aware of the feminist ones. It is always to me a slightly shocking quality in even very sophisticated, very hip, very young New Yorkers that they seem to be perfectly oblivious to anything less obvious than Liberace.

Adele made a placating remark to the chick's question saying, "The paintings don't exclude men. They just show how it

could be if women are together. I like to see women together sometimes". The Ravi Shankar girl pushed the discussion until the phrase "Women's Liberation" finally escaped Adele's mouth. At that, a boy in the class completely flew out of his mind. He turned around and started swearing at Adele. "I have had my belly full of that lib crap. I got my wife out of that crock of shit". He went on to say he and his wife were living in a commune full of beautiful people and she was pregnant and doing natural childbirth and so forth and she was going to breast feed and so on. He ended with an inarticulate chain of abuse directed at Adele. I was worried about Adele's being able to match the guy verbally. I knew that she was the product of a strict "Ladies-never-swear" upbringing, and was simply not conditioned to be able to defend herself or to even be quick with milder rebuttal as long as it involved nastiness. Besides I was so mad myself I couldn't keep my tongue any longer and I had to enter the fray. My anger was up so many decibels that my mouth simply opened of its own accord.

I was trying to keep quiet because I knew from past experience the folly of plunging into such an argument under the circumstances. I knew it would have to be Adele and me against twenty others. You have to be very, very good to answer twenty simultaneous attackers in a debate. Just knowing that makes even quick-tongued women stutter with the glut of their anger. I too was nearly incoherent. The argument continued. First, I said to the chick, "What's wrong with excluding men?" Then she answered saying "How insensitive and inhuman and unliberal that would be." I said, "Well, for example, if men were excluded or obliterated we wouldn't have had to have been afraid to come here tonight." At that nine people jumped on me on my right and I looked and they were all male because the class was mostly male and the rest of the girls were not the type to speak up except for the Ravi Shankar girl who was really ruining her image even further by doing just that. You know, men don't even like women who argue intelligently against women's lib. One guy was yelling something, the old thing about "You have to have men for sex. And procreation! What about that huh, huh, what about that!" I said that I highly recommended test tube babies once the vast supply of homeless and abused children runs out. They all made a great groaning

sound and said that was the sickest thing they had ever heard - that the natural way, the organic way was the truth and the light. I said the artificial way was the way. The boys all called me a fascist and they cited BRAVE NEW WORLD, saying that was the future of feminist infidels. I replied that BRAVE NEW WORLD had cunningly cast a slur for all time on the freedom women might have if they were free with their own bodies, associating freedom for women with a dreary mechanized totalitarian state. I said, "If Huxley had a theme it was this: If women are ever free with their bodies, life will not be worth living". As a matter of fact, I said as I was reading BRAVE NEW WORLD I was having a hard time identifying with how bad things were supposed to be in the novel because I kept thinking how great it would be to be a woman living in such a universe. "Anyway", I finally said to them all, "I don't need men for anything, not even sex". They made some more disparaging groans. One of them went so far as to say, "Oh come on you really want a penis, you've got to, every woman does". "Nope, I am a Lesbian, don't have the slightest use for one - and for that matter most straight women don't either". No sooner were those magic words out of my mouth than while I was turned to the nine or so men who were attacking me on my right a boy who was lounging against the wall on my left suddenly spoke up: "Have you ever had a Relationship?" Very concerned for me as it were.

I jerked my head around to him and said, "NO" and jerked just as quickly back to answer the others still yelling questions and remarks to me on my right. Later, though, I just couldn't believe it. Relationship? I knew where that discussion would have led. He had been all prepared. With all the responses. It's a game every Lesbian has been trapped by every time she tells some man she's gay. Here's how the game goes: If you say A, yes you have had a "relationship", then they will say that you've had a bad relationship and that's why you don't like men. If you say B, that you've had more than one relationship, then they will say that you haven't been with enough men you don't know a fair sample. If you say C, you have screwed with a hundred men then they will say you haven't been with one man long enough to get to "relate" to a man well. If D, in spite of everything you have had sufficient quality, quantity, etc., then they will reply that there is something

I got it. That ~~was~~ how he did it. How he made me lose. "Have you ever had a Relationship?" he ~~had~~ asked and I had said "NO" instead of ~~saying~~ first, "Just what do you mean boy. Are you trying to ask me if I have ever had a penis in my vagina. In other words do you want to know if I have ever been fucked?" (As in fucked over and fucked up, as in ~~knocked~~ over and knocked up). Anyway he ~~had~~ won somehow. It

"I am still bored."

**By HOPE THOMPSON**

The book is divided into two parts, the first part, happily, ~~being~~ about Lesbians. It

is a good discussion for the heterosexual. It begins however with "Guilt is at the core of the Lesbian's life experience." This is what comes of listening uncritically to the male homosexual. To be sure many Lesbians do suffer guilt over their emotional orientation, but many do not nor ever have. In the matter of guilt Lesbians differ markedly from gay males as they do in every other way. While the male homosexual falls *short* of "manhood", the acme of human perfection in the eyes of society, the Lesbian tries to rise *above* the second class status society accords the female. She pursues activities society admires and these are more often than not "male" activities, activities that do not generally bring on an attack of guilt. Neither I nor most of the Lesbians I have known have suffered guilt over our emotional orientation. The latter is

The authors trip over "butch/femme" aspects of Lesbianism. As I discussed that matter at length in the June/July 1971 issue of the LADDER, I shall say no more here. . . . "When a young woman begins to be aware of *sexual* feelings for other women, . . ." (italics mine) . . . This may be carping on my part, but more often than not such young women are not aware of sexual feelings, but of intense emotional feelings that they only later on learn, from our male dominated psychological establishment, can be labelled (or mislabelled) "sexual." While the male homosexual teaches Lesbians to think in terms of sex only, not to mention the influence of male

A chapter on the bar scene is pure New York provincialism. The authors, in describing the New York City gay bar situation, its Mafia connections, do not specify that they are talking about gay bars in New York City, but imply that they are telling us of gay bars everywhere in the United States. To one who was born in Manhattan and lived there until the age of 21 and who then lived another 30 years in and around San Francisco (the gay Mecca), the whole chapter is amusing. It took me back to the days when, like any good New Yorker, I believed that essentially the United States was contained in New York City and the "outback" was populated by the ignorant and the primitive. The authors imagine that the gay (or homophile) movement began and continues in New York City only. The truth is that the movement began in California which still leads the nation in social innovation, both worthy



and absurd. While the New York chapter of the National Organization for Women was displaying sickening anti-Lesbianism (well described in this book), the San Francisco chapter was welcoming Lesbians. With over 60% of the San Francisco population listed in the 1970 Census as single, it is difficult to bring about the Stonewall riots and Christopher Street riots of confrontation in that most gay of large cities. New York seems at times to be in the vanguard because it is so much more backward socially than the west. What is news in New York is old hat in San Francisco. Nor can we pretend that only the coasts lead in social enlightenment. The home of women's liberation seems to be the midwest, of all

places, with Chicago as its center.

While many readers may be thrilled about all the "gay pride" talk in this book, I am always reminded of "pride goeth before a fall." I am waiting for the day when Lesbians will quite simply accept themselves as human beings with their various faults and virtues. I get very bored with being told I should strut around filled with pride at my Lesbianism. When we come full circle, perhaps we will see signs carried aloft proclaiming WHITE IS WONDERFUL and HETEROSEXUAL IS HAPPY.

(HOPE THOMPSON IS A PEN NAME  
FOR RITA LAPORTE)

## Interview with Barbara Love and Sidney Abbott

CO-AUTHORS OF SAPPHO WAS A RIGHT-ON WOMAN.  
INTERVIEWER FOR THE LADDER, NANCY TUCKER

(Barbara J. Love, born in 1937 in Montclair, New Jersey, attended Purdue University and then Syracuse University where she graduated in 1959. She has had considerable editorial experience, most recently as an editorial writer for CBS Television Network. Ms. Love, President of Foremost Americans Publishing Company,

edited and published FOREMOST WOMEN IN COMMUNICATIONS, an important reference work on women in broadcasting, publishing, teaching and allied professions.

Sidney A. Abbott was born in the nation's capital in 1937 and educated first at Smith College, then the Univer-

sity of New Mexico, and finally Columbia University where she received an M.S. in Urban Planning. She has worked in an editorial capacity for several publishers including McGraw-Hill. Ms. Abbott is presently Production Editor of Foremost Americans Publishing Company in New York City.)

- N - How did you get into Gay Liberation? Were either of you in the old homosexual movement?
- B - I was in the bars - I knew the movement existed and went over to DOB, but it seemed very depressing. Not that the bars weren't depressing but the bars at least had intrigue! DOB was kind of terrifying to me, because you didn't have the covers of the loud music and the drinks - it was just sterile stark despair! I was in the women's movement very, very heavily from '68 and early '69, was working with Friedan and on employment issues. I got very heavily involved in NOW, then went to Gay Liberation, and eventually went back to NOW to confront them on the Lesbian issue.
- S - I worked with black people as an unpaid resource person, then was employed by them in an OEO program. I went into Women's Liberation at Columbia, which Kate Millett and a group of others founded about the spring of '69. Then I lost a lover, and in the profound despair of that became very frightened about my future. I suddenly realized that I was over 30 and had lost a lover of over 7 years, was suddenly terrified of being a homosexual! I had always loved being a homosexual! Barbara and I were starting our relationship and we were both wondering what the future could hold for us; drifted through a fantastic series of events - we were counseled by Father Robert Weeks of the Episcopal Church. Then one night we were sitting in the Hippodrome bar when a little guy walked through. He was sort of chubby, and was just smiling, smiling, smiling! He had a petition, a very serious petition for GLF about an arrest case or something. He said, "Would you sign this? The meetings are Sunday night at the Church." That was the most outgoing homosexual I ever met in my life!

That, plus Father Weeks, plus Rita Mae Brown, are the three things that eventually got us into gay liberation.

- B - When Rita Mae, whom we knew from NOW, had a meeting, a very important meeting, of Lesbians from gay liberation and Lesbians from the women's movement, we went. That was like a coming together of the gay feminists.
- S - Out of the meeting that night came three consciousness-raising groups. Out of one of the groups came the idea of presenting the women's movement with a position paper on Lesbianism. That was to become "The Woman-Identified Woman". How do you get it to them? Well . . . they're having this Second Women's Congress, and they screwed us on the first one. So, wham! into the Second Women's Congress as the Lavendar Menace!
- B - From then on we became thoroughly involved in Gay Liberation.
- N - Where have you gone since then?
- B - We were in Radicalesbians during its founding months, then Sidney had to go to New Mexico because her mother was extremely ill. We had been in a Radicalesbian consciousness-raising group for a year, but found it all terribly mandatory, and also I didn't agree with their attitude toward the press (I want to work with the press and they didn't) and they didn't want to work with men, and I did. So I left. When Sidney came back and I told her I'd left Radicalesbians, well, we thought the world had shattered. But then I went over to GLF, and worked there for a while. I worked with the first Christopher Street Liberation Day Committee and the Gay Celebration of Love and Life on Christmas Eve, 1970. I began to find people who were willing to work with the press and I did find people eventually who encompassed my beliefs and philosophy as to how we should work. Now we're working all over the place.
- N - Do you think that you'll be going back into the Establishment when you finish the book?
- S - We have lived for two years a dropout lifestyle, but the time has come when I'm a little tired of buying \$5 jeans. There are things I want to do, books I want to own. I think we're saying that this fall we'd very much like to go back and also continue work in the





- movement with one organization. We might like to form a new organization which would be entirely a work group, a Lesbian activist group with basically civil rights goals which would use the techniques of zap and confrontation and harassment, if necessary.
- N - Do you think you'll have a hard time going back into the Establishment?
- B - Yes. I haven't broken through all the barriers. I've said it in the press and I've worked it out with my family. But to go all the way! To go all the way would be not to have any fears confronting the very Establishment people I used to work with. I'll have to have myself very much together, to be very strong, because I'll be alone. If you go above 42nd Street as a Lesbian, you're very much alone in a hostile environment.
- N - Do you think you would be able to draw closet professional women into this group you want to form?
- S - Yes. And also the women who have been purged from NOW and the women who are tired of working with men in GAA because women's issues cannot be considered because they are in a tiny minority.
- B - I'd like to work on something as profound and with the impact as something with the Advertising Council, with free money and free time from advertising agencies to do very "pro" gay public service announcements like they've done for Blacks and Smokey the Bear and cancer and inflation and the war. The Lesbian issue, the gay issue, fits within the criteria of topics they select for free public service, worth perhaps \$20 million in advertising time, all free! You just need to convince them that this is a valid issue of injustice to people! I'm into thinking that you have to use the big guns to get anybody.
- N - What do you want to see happen in the Gay Liberation movement?
- B - We, along with other people, have a vision of the future which we must live to make come true, regardless of the consequences. We're doing it for ourselves and for others and for millions of people behind us and ahead of us. We realize that this movement somehow has got to put effort into protecting 95% of the people who can't

- join it, because they can't even keep jobs! We must get, at the very minimum, fair employment for homosexuals so they can come out on the streets and still have a job the next day.
- S - The Christopher Street parade was billed as going to have 25,000 people. But you're not going to get 25,000 if people are terrified of losing their jobs. But if you work for fair employment - you'll get the 25,000!
- B - We don't know if when this book comes out we can get jobs. We have careers in very Establishment industries - myself in a Madison Avenue sort of thing and Sidney as an urban planner. We are typical of millions.
- N - What are your family backgrounds?
- B - I come from an upper middle class background that, while they consider themselves liberal-minded, they are actually against anything original and creative in human behavior. My background is that they still don't like Jews, Blacks, miniskirts, pantsuits, or Volkswagens! I never expect to be accepted in my hometown and go back to the country club as a Lesbian. I'm breaking all the rules just by living in The Village! All of the children in my family have broken a lot of the rules so I'm not exactly that far out.
- S - My father is a retired Army officer. He has a deep psychological understanding of where I am, though various things, like my mother's death and his remarriage, have prevented me from talking to him explicitly. Moving around as an Army child I realized that there were different value situations everywhere I went. In some places girls were allowed to smoke and in some places we were not allowed to smoke. Some places you could have sex as a teenager and some places you couldn't. I realized very early that there were different value structures. I went to Smith and am now finishing up a Masters at Columbia. And I want to grow up to be a Most Ordinary Lesbian, to feel natural and free. That's my goal.
- N - How do you feel you broke with early sex role stereotyping?
- B - Being an athlete and having held a world's record in swimming was very important in my first breaking out from the role of Woman. It was being

- an active, independent creature when all my girlfriends in school were ogling the men and watching them play football and basketball as an audience.
- S - My way of breaking early with the female sex role was by reading books and being what was considered, for a girl, an intellectual. I had a confrontation with my aunt when I was 15 when she said I absolutely had to give up reading books and using big words because nobody would want to marry me - I had to be much smarter about catching a man! It made me give up on heterosexual relationships - if that was what my mother and my aunt told me, that wasn't that I wanted - it meant giving up my total self in favor of marriage and children and I couldn't do that! I realize now that young heterosexuals can develop things much better, but at that time - the 40's and the early 50's - I couldn't do it.
- N - What about coming out?
- B - I went through the whole thing - attempted suicide, the George Washington Bridge type thing. I was about 23, and it was before I even knew I was gay. I felt so silly when the policeman asked me why I was out there - how could I possibly tell him I was in love with a woman? It sounded so ridiculous! The whole thing was so foreign and so tragic. And it was fuel for Gay Liberation.
- N - Barbara, when did you find out you were gay?
- B - Well, I guess I was having Lesbian experiences for several years before I even said Lesbian. Then I said "Lesbian" and hated myself. And then eventually liked it when Gay Liberation came around, and now I'm proud of it!
- N - Sidney, what about you?
- S - At 14 or 15 I thought I had invented Lesbianism, like a lot of young women alone, because I wanted a different kind of relationship with a woman. I didn't have an explicit sexual experience until much later, though.
- N - Have either of you had sexual experiences with men?
- S - I think we've figured we've slept with as many men as women.
- B - But it's a qualitative thing - I didn't enjoy it.
- N - Your relationship appears to be un-

- usual. How about a rap on it?
- S - We will have been together two years in October.
- N - How do you date it?
- S - I date it from the first night we had a real date, and we began going together fairly heavily about two weeks after that and I moved in about two months after that.
- N - How did you meet?
- S - Through friends.
- B - We met at a very down period in our lives. We both lost our lovers. As a matter of fact, our lovers left us to go with each other.
- S - When I met Barbara, and I understood how typical the story of how my lover had left to go with her lover was, Barbara rapped to me about the gay subculture life, and I became terrified. I was very scared of it. I didn't want all my relationships broken up. I didn't want to go near typical gay life. It hadn't been natural for me to go near it before - my lover had two children, we had a dog, and we had straight friends. I said I couldn't live that way. I also knew I couldn't live alone in the world. Barbara had a saying that was a product of her experience - "Always is six months, forever is a year, and eternity is a year and a half". When we just started to get together she said "Do you think we'll be together always?" Then she laughed, and said "Of course we'll be together always!", and told me the saying. This absolutely blew my mind! And I realized that to literally survive, to avoid being on the George Washington Bridge myself, I had to find a new way of living. A big thing in my life is that when you're living alone with a lover essentially in a straight world, you come to cling to that lover far too much. One major value change that I've had is in not feeling that I have to cling so much to Barbara, that if she does see someone else or if I see someone else, that it doesn't have to cause a major upheaval. And I think that the only reason that I did before was that I was just terrified of being alone. I feel a lot of the things from the gay subculture and gay counter-culture have enriched my life, and have made me less afraid.
- N - And now that this situation has happened - that each of you is seeing

- someone else - it doesn't affect you as it would have in the past?
- S - We keep falling in love on different levels. It's like a beautiful slow dive into a pool of water. It seems to me that we've fallen in love on about ten levels.
- B - Something unusual happened with me with Sidney, that I think is a tremendous breakthrough in my own personal life. Sidney is the first woman I've ever gone with or become involved with that grew first out of a friendship and an intellectual communication. Everything else had been a bodily attraction and a whole big heavy whether-we-could-even-talk-the-same-language-or-not thing. I thought it was a real breakthrough - we could talk and I got rid of that hangup of a sexual desire. For me that was the beginning of a whole new way of looking at things, a new value system, certainly. Our relationship is very solid. It's not vulnerable because we love each other! It's a very good relationship. So if a sexual attraction or a communication or some desire for someone else develops, our relationship is very whole and encompassing and we don't feel it's threatening. Though we did in the beginning.
- S - Having the movement, the C-R group, and each other, we are really very privileged, happy people! People who don't have all this can really be more vulnerable. Like the problem I had when relating to someone else was that she had very deep gut needs which were not being taken care of, whereas my deep gut needs were being taken care of! It was an inequity. We couldn't enjoy the unique aspects which came out of doing things together because she had needs which were not being fulfilled and I didn't want to subvert my own needs. I would have had to withdraw from Barbara too much in order to meet her needs. So I wound up feeling very guilty, very bad, and cooled that relationship. And she had to cool it too because it would have been destructive. Such an interaction with another person may or may not involve going to bed. It has to be important and necessary - it isn't a license for having a good time. It doesn't mean that if I see somebody at a party with a groovy body that I'm going to sleep with her! Although if that need is important and necessary, I will.
- B - One of the things we're trying and realizing is that having an attraction to somebody or a good feeling or something that you want to culminate in full expression does not mean that you want to live with them, have a dog, have a house, be together forever. You can have that good feeling and express it without signing a contract on the spot forever with a dog and house. The two don't have to go together like love and marriage and a horse and carriage and all that baloney. I think that separating these elements can be done. There is danger in it - like there is in any experimentation - because you don't always know what the situation is.
- N - Would you recommend it for a lot of people?
- S - Well, we're doing it within a fantastic context of ideological input and support. When we went through this initially, Barbara started seeing someone, and there was really support - for her, for me, for both of us, without value judgment. The others in the C-R group didn't say you should stay together or you shouldn't stay together. What was so beautiful to me, and this was the first time I really came to trust gay people in a deep sense, was that it was support and care-giving to both of us.
- B - I don't recommend anything to anybody! It's a very personal kind of thing that you go through. You have to evaluate constantly the value of honesty versus practicality and danger. You make different decisions at different times. For us, we felt together enough to perhaps explore without danger. Maybe a few months earlier it would have been more dangerous. So much of this involves where you're at, where the other person's at, and where you want to go. It's also an exploration of how much and what sex means. Does it need to redirect your whole life?
- S - I think it's a realistic position. I don't think we're saying that everyone should do this. I have come to a tentative conclusion on sex. The political point of view in the movement is that a sexual relationship should be, can be, or is, an extension of a friendship, that there's a natural continuum from having coffee and going to the movies to going to bed and talking and rapping and getting to know someone. I don't quite think so, because I think the cultural input against this is too strong. Being unclothed with another person, letting another person touch you, is the most deeply intimate, personal and revealing thing you can do in our society. So that I find that if you take this to the end of the continuum and have sex you do have a responsibility to the other person because they have revealed themselves to you in a way that they reserve for very very few people. At this point in time actually taking a friendship into sex does bring in a whole level of responsibility for that person.
- N - Your C-R group is very important in your lives and thinking, isn't it?
- S - Our consciousness-raising group was Barbara's idea. The core problem for Lesbians in New York about a year or so ago was that they were terribly fragmented. You had a large number, very hidden, in NOW. You had some in the radical women's movement, DOB, Radicalesbians, and Gay Liberation Front Women. And no one was talking to anyone - each group had The Truth! Initially we called it the Great International Consciousness-Raising Group! The idea was to take one or two people from each group or organization. It had to be on an invited basis because they had to be able to talk. We had the President of New York NOW and two other committee chairwomen from NOW, DOB, Radicalesbians, GLF Women, and Gay People at Columbia. In all, about 14 women. After about a year of this, although some people have left and other people have come in, it has become the core of a communications network. A new thing that has happened in the C-R group is that we have admitted a woman who, for lack of anything else, can be called a professional woman. She has introduced us to Lesbians who are really into the Establishment and who don't identify with any of the existing gay groups. They are tremendously interested in Gay Liberation and are look-
- ing for support from it even though they don't believe that they could ever walk into a meeting.
- B - Our C-R group is really a nucleus for a lot of our thinking and our nourishment and pride, much more than a theoretical group.
- S - It's everything! It's a social group, an action group . . .
- B - A theoretical group, a network. It's so many things! It's all very strong, positive people. All the people in our C-R group are, in some way or other, being counted upon by a lot of unknown people.
- N - Who is in the group?
- B - Oh, Kate Millett, Tina Mandel, Isabel Miller and a good group of others who are writing books or are otherwise active. One woman is making films on the new Lesbian life styles. All of this will eventually, hopefully, provide input and direction to millions. This positive input is not only beautiful but it's absolutely necessary to continue on in the front. Every gay activist needs this - I don't think you could find a gay activist who could do it alone.
- N - What are your thoughts on Lesbianism and Women's Liberation?
- S - We both think the Lesbian has a unique opportunity right now, versus the male homosexual, because of the women's movement. As I see it right now there is no natural way for men to get together as openly heterosexual and openly homosexual. The women's movement deals all the time with issues of independence and autonomy which relate to where gay women are. It can be brought up very naturally. We really have a historical opportunity to communicate with straight people, women particularly, in a natural and open fashion. The two groups can get to know each other in a way that's never before been possible. The women's movement is a laboratory for discovering how to confront the deepest psychological fears that straight people have. This is an opportunity that gay men don't have.
- B - The goals of Women's Liberation and Gay Liberation I see as so much the same they parallel each other. When you hear a feminist talk about feminist goals, you can sit there as a Lesbian and identify all the way through in



terms of independence, in terms of women loving and valuing each other, in terms of control over your own body. The women's movement won't listen to Lesbian issues, although parts of it have. You almost have to gain a captive audience, like at the Second Women's Congress, and make them listen, because society is afraid of hearing this! If they do allow themselves to understand, they may be changed by this understanding, and then begin to accept gay people, and then they are vulnerable to accepting it within themselves! This is a tremendous threat, just listening to it.

S - Homosexuals into any movement must accept that we are a real threat to heterosexuals! We are a threat to the entire lifestyle on which this country is built, which affects the economic system, and all the rest. We are not just other people who are just like heterosexuals with the same ambitions and all . . .

B - The most important link between Women's Liberation and Gay Liberation is the sex-role stereotyping. That is the issue that has brought accusations of Lesbian-Dyke into the women's movement from the very beginning - the understanding that they are breaking out of the role of "Woman", which "Lesbian" has done in many, many ways. Lesbians realize that they have broken the appropriate behavior patterns for women in many other ways than just going to bed with women.

N - What is the personal result of your involvement in Gay Liberation?

S - What I have gained from all of this is the value of love for my gay brothers and sisters, and to not be afraid of them.

B - For many years before Gay Liberation I was in the gay community and in the bars. I undervalued consistently because I thought gay was bad and non-gay was good. I saw all my gay friends, including myself, as inferior to all my straight friends. Now that was something that completely changed when Gay Liberation came around - I eventually saw all my gay friends as superior. Now I see them as very strong, courageous people. I began to value myself more. Through Gay Liberation we haven't found all the

answers as to who we are and what we want to do. Rather we've found a whole new perspective and pride that sheds a new light on everything that we've ever done and want to do that demands a re-analysis of everything that we're doing.

S - I was talking to a woman who is not in the movement and I was describing to her our C-R group, which is now overlapping also friendship, intellectual and sexual worlds, and she said, "Well, that sounds like my group of gay friends", and so-and-so had an affair with so-and-so, and so forth. She described this with so much jealousy, fear and pain! As Barbara says, we've been here before but we're in a new place.

B - Our heads are in a different place.

S - It's not that different from what heterosexuals do or what gay people do except that we're thinking about what we're doing and we're trying not to fuck over other people. We're trying not to exploit someone else!

B - Some people reading this in THE LADDER will say this isn't any different from the bar scene. But the bag is having to stay together - the jealousy, the fear, the clinging. In other words, we're trying to get rid of all of the barnacles on these relationships. On the most elementary level the situations seem the same, but on a more profound level there are incredible changes which do a great deal to free people from the pain that goes with the total dependency thing.

S - What we're trying to do is do this within a value structure, an ethical structure, so that you don't exploit and take advantage of other people and play on their fears and bring your own needs into a situation which cannot answer them.

B - As Lesbian activists we have a whole new viewpoint on life. We're exploring new ways of living. Here Lesbianism isn't even accepted yet and we're talking about being in multiple relationships, which other people would say is promiscuous. And they'd say, "Oh, I always knew homosexuals couldn't stay together and couldn't make a life together"! It's hard for us to go beyond the Lesbian thing which has already freaked them out and say, "Yeah, and we're into new lifestyles,

too!" What we've really been doing all along is exploring, unknowingly and unconsciously, with life, with what may be a future lifestyle for heterosexuals. We're way ahead of them in some ways. They think we're back in a

primitive age, but we're living in a way that they may want to live and are talking about living. We have this whole new viewpoint! It's most exciting!

## There Are No Gypsies in New York City

By SUSAN DAILY

The walls and the furniture were of one dimension. There was no way of distinguishing where one ended and the other began. It was the seventh day she had gotten out of bed after falling asleep at dawn only to find that everything was much more the same than different. She imagined spreading her life out as if it were a map and walking across the years one foot after another. It would be possible, that way, for half of her to be in elementary school and half of her to be nineteen. With small bare feet she crossed the room, counting the steps that it took. It always took eleven steps, but she always counted anyway.

She had piled her clothes up in the corner through the week, and now she found herself bending over the heap of fabrics, wondering why she was dressing at all. Her hair was caught in her fingers (she had begun to comb it with them), and she had had to extricate her hand before choosing something to wear. The apartment was silent and dark because she had pulled down the blinds that morning, but there were noises coming from the street. It was the noise outside that finally persuaded her to wriggle into her blue shirt, her blue pants. She wondered if that was what she had chosen yesterday, but she couldn't remember.

She went into the kitchen and began to boil some water. Her fingers were long and bony, and in her wrist several blue veins wriggled and pulsed. The way that she bent her head over her arm released waves of chestnut hair, and all but concealed her narrow, pale face. She was thinking of the last time she had been in New York City. She had been going to a bar with a group of women, and they had walked to where the car was parked only to find that there was an empty truck parked in the middle of the

street in such a way that they could not get out. She had been far less interested in that than everyone else because she had been staring into the window of a basement apartment. The window was like the window of a store front, and it said, "Fortunes Told, Cards Read, Palms." There was a velvety curtain pulled to the side, and she knew that the curtain was usually drawn to separate the living quarters from the front room. The woman who told the fortunes was sitting on a couch before a sewing machine, and her two children, both naked to the waist, both curly-haired and dark-eyed, one a small girl, the other a slightly older boy, were running out of the apartment, onto the sidewalk, and back again. It was a kind of game. She could not stop staring at them, at their dark rippling hair, at their dark smouldering eyes, at the necklaces they both wore about their necks. In the back of the apartment, there were two beds, and a man was resting on one of them. Then one of the women she was with had begun to press down on the horn of the truck, and the man got up off the bed and came out and moved the truck. Then they had to go, and she got into the car with the others.

It was not because her romantic illusions had been dispelled that she felt so depressed. On the contrary, it was because there was something genuinely otherly in the faces of the children, something that made it terribly wrong that they should be living in a world without even the mystery of trees, where a drawn curtain and a pink neon sign should be the entire sum of the past. Soon, how soon she did not know, they would be as separate from one another as the outside room was from the one-room apartment behind. The little girl would always be clothed to the waist, and she would learn to separate the dream from



reality, the table from the sewing machine, the women from the men.

The water was boiling. She made herself some coffee. She had a deck of Tarot cards herself. The last time that she had laid them out, the pictures had stared up at her as flat and blank as the apartment walls. One of the cards was red and gold, with a lion, the sun, and the laughing face of a child within it. She had fled from it, folding all the cards together and stacking them in a corner of her desk. She hadn't looked at them since. That was when she had stopped writing down her dreams, stopped writing entirely. She had spent two weeks afterward punctually going out at ten, walking about the city streets till noon, and returning home for lunch. She had decided to find a job. Things being the way that they were, it seemed as meaningless to attempt to make a private and personal order out of everything as to deny that there was an order. When she worked, the bland monotony of the days seemed inevitable and honest, at least.

But even that hadn't worked. Of course, she knew that it wouldn't. In a masochistic frenzy, she had become an interviewer for the personnel department of a huge department store. For eight weeks she had asked trembling young women their work history, had filed cards, had been "Miss Andrews." She was overcome by shame and anger each time she performed the ritual of questions and answers. She fended off the approaches of men in the office, ate alone, never smiled. And the long-boned, dirty-finger-nailed women who came in looking for work sent her through spasms of humiliation and anger with herself. When she finally quit, she didn't even return to pick up her last check. Later, when her money began to run out, she was angry about that.

It was five o'clock of the same day, she was sitting in the corner of the livingroom reading when the telephone began to ring. She put down the book and answered it.

"Lisa?"

"Uh-huh," she said, scribbling on a pad that she kept by the phone. Her cigarettes were in the other room. She would have to excuse herself to get them.

"It's Anne," the voice said.

"Hi."

"I was thinking of coming over to see you tonight."

"Okay."

"What have you been doing?"

"When?" Lisa asked, confused. She hadn't seen any of her friends for a week.

The week was ostensibly for writing, but she had not written either. She couldn't even remember if she had begun the book she was reading that day or earlier. The days ran together. The blinds were always closed, the light was always the same. The clock was stopped at five, A.M. or P.M., she didn't know which.

"Today, this week, since I last saw you. Have you been writing?"

"No. I don't know what I have been doing. Getting to bed at dawn. Getting up late. I haven't been going out."

Anne was puzzled. Lisa could see her neat, small face making a querulous face, a compliment to the pause, a physical comma. "Well, you didn't come to the party, and I figured that you were probably writing. Have you been depressed?"

Lisa wondered where in her tall, long body she stored whatever it was that made all her friends so maternal toward her. "Yes. I am. I am depressed because there are no more gypsies."

Anne did not know what to answer to that. "Well, would it be alright for me to come over and visit, or would you rather be alone?"

"No, come over," Lisa said, "I'd like to see you. I'm really not all that depressed. I just haven't talked to anyone lately, and I don't know what to say."

"Does it have anything to do with me?"

Lisa shook her head in exasperation. It seemed as if she only had relationships with people based on their sense of guilt or maternity. Perhaps that was because she was usually alone, and her friends were usually with other people. She had never been able to explain that even when she was with other people, that night in New York City, for example, she was more often than not removed, her thoughts somewhere else.

"No, Anne, it doesn't have anything to do with you."

"Oh."

She wondered if that was the wrong thing to say, if she should have said that it did, so that Anne might feel that she were included in some way in Lisa's week apart from her, apart from everyone.

"I meant to call you sooner," Anne said.

"Look, Anne, could I go and get a cigarette?" Lisa asked, her fingers drumming on the tabletop.

"Why don't I hang up and come over," Anne said.

"Alright. See you later."

"Bye."

Lisa strode into the livingroom and snatched up her box of cigarettes. She put on some music and sat down in the corner. She started to pick up her book, and then she remembered that Anne was coming over, and that she really didn't have time to read into the next chapter. It was too bad because she liked the book. It was about a woman who tried to murder her husband.

It occurred to her that the apartment probably reeked of tobacco and the stale smell of convalescent homes. The smell of hours of inactivity settled into layers and compressed. It would upset Anne. She began picking up glasses and cups, began to empty ashtrays, opened a window. She went into the bathroom and washed her face. She turned the record over and sat down to listen to it and wait for Anne.

When the doorbell rang, she took a glance about to try to see the room as Anne would. It was bare, the wood floor was slightly dusty, the books crowded together on the bookshelves, her chair sat stolidly in the corner. It would do. She answered the door.

Anne stood in the doorway with her sketchbook tucked under one arm. She looked tidy and pulled together, as she always did, and her short hair had been cropped even shorter. She was not taller than five feet, and today she wore a crisp, well-pressed shirt and clean blue slacks. Lisa was glad to see her, surprised as she always was at how much surety and tranquillity emanated from this small woman. She leaned over and kissed her, and took her hand and led her into the apartment.

"Well," Lisa said, finding herself smiling, "you look wonderful. I'm glad you came over."

Anne slipped off her jacket and sat down on the couch. She put down her sketchbook, her small hands resting for a moment on its cover. "I'm glad to see you too, Lisa."

Lisa gestured to the sketchbook. "Have you been doing new drawings? I mean, since I saw you last?"

Anne shrugged apologetically. "Well, I've been trying to. It's hard because I don't have an awful lot of time. Jamie is taking a lot of my time. We went to the zoo yesterday, and for a little while I sat on a bench and drew, but then he got tired and wanted to go home."

Jamie was seven, Anne's son by a brief and unhappy marriage. Anne lived with four other women in a large, old house, and

they took turns taking care of him. Jamie was alternately demanding and noisy and silent and moody. He hated going to school. He and Lisa eyed one another silently each time they saw each other, neither quite knowing what to say.

"Have you written anything lately?" Anne asked. Her round eyes rested lightly on Lisa's face. The touch of them was not demanding, not even questioning, really. It was the look of someone in the habit of being gentle and sensitive to other people's moods. Lisa studied her hands.

"No, not so much. I haven't written for quite a while. I sometimes think that I shouldn't be."

"Why not? That seems silly. I mean, if you don't want to, you shouldn't, but I don't understand why you should feel that you shouldn't."

At one time, Anne and Lisa had been lovers, and it was of this that Lisa thought now. Her eyes narrowed. Vividly she could see the wide bed in Anne's room, and the branches of the tree outside her window. Lisa had sat in a hard-backed chair by the window, naked and somewhat chilled, watching the morning subtly changing colors. Anne had slept like a young girl, her knees almost touching her chest, the blankets all swirled about her, her body the center, the central point. Her face had been slightly flushed, and the area about her eyes was white. Lisa had gotten dressed almost silently, with as little movement and sound as possible, and had walked home. It had been cold, and Lisa had thought that it might snow. Her hair was damp on the underside, and she had tucked it under her collar as if it were a scarf. That afternoon, she had been all but paralyzed, and she sat in her own bedroom with her legs tucked under her and the sound of the telephone ringing in her ears.

"Why, Lisa?" Anne asked again.

Lisa met Anne's soft eyes. "I find it very difficult to try to explain, Anne." She knew that her face was always being read by her friends, and that what it said was always being interpreted toward their own conclusions. Usually they felt guilty. It was what motivated her to explain, to over-explain, to be repetitious and verbose. She was always engaged in a struggle between the way she seemed and the way she felt.

"Alright," Anne said, not meaning, "Alright, don't tell me," but meaning, "Alright, I'll wait until you have the words."

"I suppose it just feels like a cheat sometimes." She thought of Anne asleep, she thought of the fortune teller, she thought of the cards. "If it showed how all these different things connect in my life, if it showed what the undercurrent is that makes me and makes people act the way they do, decide the things that they do, it wouldn't be a cheat. But somehow it never does. Saying it, as honest as I try to be, hides it."

"I still don't see," Anne said.

"Alright," Lisa said, taking a deep breath. "Maybe it's because I don't think that anyone has the right to stand aside and watch and make judgements. We all have to make judgements of some kind, we all do, but it's the worst kind of deception for us to pretend that we don't, that we are separate from everything that happens to us and around us. And when people are reading, or for that matter, when I am writing, I am pretending just that. I'm not being where I am, I'm not dealing with where I am, I'm usually rearranging where I was, saying how I should have dealt with it. And as long as I keep doing that, I'll never deal with anything."

"You are where you were when you're writing about it, though, Lisa. Or so it seems to me. Why is it any worse to be alone and write than to be alone and think? What's wrong with that, anyway?"

Anne's warm gaze made Lisa feel almost angry. It didn't seem possible that Anne could look at her with that soft, understanding look, and not understand at all. She turned the palms of her hands upward in a motion of emptiness, of the futility of saying more. It said, I am empty of words, I cannot explain any more. Surely Anne could understand that?

"Do you want to be loved, Anne?" Lisa asked, her voice coming out like an echo, very faraway.

"I suppose," Anne said. "I guess everyone does. I know that there are people who love me, and that makes me happy. I guess it's as important to me to be able to love other people."

"Well, I don't," Lisa said calmly. She felt a burst of almost childish happiness when she heard the words. They were true, she was sure of it. It always makes me feel that something is expected of me."

Anne frowned. "I don't believe that."

"Well, it's true."

"Then it must be because you are afraid of being yourself, afraid of being rejected."

"No," Lisa said, "I am afraid of not being myself and being accepted for what I'm not."

"You don't give other people very much credit then."

"No," Lisa said, a little ashamed for beginning the conversation, wondering what her motives had been. "I guess not. But it doesn't make me any happier to be rejected. I guess I believe that I am sometimes worth loving, but that other people mean something else than I do by loving someone."

"So you avoid everything by isolating yourself, you only communicate by writing, and then you see through that and completely seal yourself off by not even doing that."

"Yes," said Lisa, and said it with the finality of "no." She felt wonderful. She felt as if she had been swimming upward through a thick fog and had at last reached the surface. She felt buoyant, lucid, and clear-eyed.

Anne put her hands, her small, fine hands over her face. Lisa looked up. She crossed the room and put her arms about Anne. The small woman was damp and warm and fluid. Her tears had the wonderful effect of melting her whole body. Lisa held her, marveling at how soft she was, how her breath came out in little sobs of warmth. She didn't know what to say. She opened her mouth to try to say something, and she closed it again. The memory of that cold winter morning silenced her. It would be so simple to merge into the warm fluidity of Anne's tears, to cry with her, to make love. It would be so easy to be drawn into that fog of breath and emotion. Already she could feel herself under the blankets and quilts in Anne's bedroom, sharing that nucleus, breathing in and breathing out together, believing themselves to be one, believing themselves to be understood by one another.

"Why is it so easy for you to be cold?" Anne sputtered at last. "Why is it so easy for you to just brush me and my feelings away? And worse, why is it so easy for you to push your own feelings away?"

"But it isn't," Lisa said in a small voice, "it isn't at all easy for me. It's trying to find words that lie less than other words that makes me silent."

"I don't understand," Anne said, and she blew her nose. She picked up her sketchbook and put on her jacket. "Jamie is expecting me," she said calmly. Lisa

nodded.

At the door, Anne stopped and turned about. Her eyes were soft and encompassing again. Lisa felt rigid, frozen like an animal in the light of a headlight. Every motion that she made seemed to take hours. She knew that she should find something to say.

"I could stay if you didn't want to be alone," Anne said.

"I know," Lisa said, feeling ugly and touching her unwashed, long hair. "But it wouldn't help."

"It might help me," Anne said. "It might help me to understand, Lisa."

"That's what I meant," Lisa said, "that it wouldn't help you," and she sighed, and added, "There are no gypsies in New York City."

"Well, alright," Anne said coldly and

## FIRST SECRET

By BETTE-JEAN DARST

Rene had seen her the past two Sundays, both at the stable waiting for her mount and on the bridle path where she gave Rene a brief little nod as she cantered by. She had a perfect seat. Shoulders back, balls of her English booted feet light against the irons, heels well down and hands that seemed always quiet and controlled, never deviating from their position above the withers. She rode either Shamrock, a Chestnut gelding, or Snow, a big Bay who was, Rene's brother said, a man's horse. Somehow the girl fascinated Rene. Her brother disliked her because she was neither shy nor particularly friendly and would not look with awe upon his riding ability.

"She thinks she can ride all right," he told Rene with scorn.

"But she can," Rene began, then stopped. Her brother in his male superiority had already stopped listening. He rode with his friends, fast and free and furiously and Rene would have none of them. Her father had bought her an English saddle and it gave her a sense of pride to lift it out of the car trunk and carry it into the stable, calling out to Alex, "I'll take Bess today. I'll saddle her myself."

That Sunday afternoon when she entered Bess's stall she heard a voice in the distance say, "Morning, Inga. Snow's in." Rene looked up as the tall girl walked by. It seemed important that she now knew her name.

opened the door and slipped out.

Lisa turned and went into the living-room. Her chair was waiting for her and her book. She saw that the books in the bookshelf were making up their minds to fall to the floor in a waterfall of bindings and paper and noise some day very soon. She saw that she left footprints in the dust on the floor, and that the footprints met one another and crossed, and crossed again, and that in the very center of the room the trail was obliterated by so many crossings. She thought that that was probably very important, that it probably meant something, and that if she could just find the time to sit and think about it, someday she might know what. But she thought that she probably never would have the time.

Rene kept Bess at a slow walk down the street. Her brother and his two friends had gone on ahead. When she crossed over into the park she urged the horse into a brisk trot, posting easily with the mare's strides. The path was soft and spongy and the trees stood in clusters on each side, locking their arms together overhead to form a canopy of green. One moment a rider was in the sunlight and the next in a shaded bower. The thick foliage blurred the noise from the streets and the dirt path led enticingly on and on, twisting in gentle curves then following the slope of a hill.

Rene heard hoofbeats behind her and turned about. There was Inga sitting to a slow canter. Rene collected her reins and gave Bess a sharp kick but to her shame the horse didn't break clean but trotted a few yards and had to be signaled again. Suddenly there was Inga smiling over at her. They cantered side by side up the gentle hill, down the other side and around the bend until the world of the woods closed in about them. They drew in their horses to rest side by side underneath the sheltering trees. And Rene felt happy to have Inga beside her.

"Look at these woods," the tall girl said. "They remind me of a Cathedral. So beautiful. So quiet."

Rene followed Inga's gaze to where the glimmering sunlight darted shaft-like between the muddled maze of tree trunks,



spilling itself out upon the tangled thicket. The woods became a pointillist painting of greens, yellows and tans framed by the twisty brown bridge path. Rene nudged her horse closer to Inga's until the two animals began a poking, kissing game. Her leg pressed against Inga's; the closeness to the girl filled Rene with a curious sensation she could not place.

"Quick," Inga whispered urgently, pointing a lean finger off towards the left. A rabbit half-hopped down upon the trail.

"He doesn't know we're here," Inga laughed and she placed her hand on Rene's wrist. They watched in silence as the creature passed in front of them.

"Psst," Inga hissed, briefly startling the horses and sending the rabbit plunging into the underbrush. There was another slight flurry as a few birds rose up from the bushes, then the green silence blanketed them again. Inga's hand remained upon Rene's arm.

"You are a good rider," she said. "I've seen you out riding and I wanted to tell you."

"I think you're much better than I am," Rene protested but Inga only laughed.

"Maybe I've just been riding longer than you." She smiled again, looking at Rene in the curiously direct fashion she had. The sun fell upon her short, straight blonde hair and splashed down upon her tweed riding jacket. Rene thought suddenly of how her brother and his friends laughed among themselves about Inga, calling her strange. She was some sort of joke because she was uninterested in them.

Bess began to nibble at the grass on the side, her bobbing head jerking the reins in Rene's hands until she let them slide down the mare's neck. Inga imperceptively nudged her horse forward until she was close to Rene again.

"Will you ride with me?" she asked suddenly.

"Sure," Rene shrugged, as if to suggest they were riding together already.

"Not just today every Sunday."

"I guess so," Rene said, and then she very much wanted to ride with Inga. "Okay," she whispered, and her smile was reflected in Inga's face.

"It's settled then. There was no one I chose to ride with," Inga said softly, "until you."

The import of the words filled Rene with a curious blend of feelings. Bess moved slightly forward but Inga backed the Bay

up, moving even closer to the girl until their legs once again touched. A bird shrilled off in the distance but the enormous silence of the inner woods enveloped the bridge path in seductive mystery until Rene felt herself suspended in another time. The world was a shimmering maze of green leaves muted by the surrealistic light. Rene's horse quivered beneath her and the musky odor of the animal filled her nostrils. Her leg was pressed by Inga's; she was filled with a sensual yearning. She leaned towards Inga who recognized the magic of the moment and, putting her hand behind Rene's head and drawing her close, kissed her deeply upon the mouth.

They were together when Rene's brother and his friends rounded the bend of the path. All saw the kiss.

"You," her brother shouted. "Get away from my sister." His cry frightened the horses. Rene clutched frantically for her reins; the Bay skipped about.

"Goddamn dike," her brother yelled at Inga. "If you want to be a man let's see if you can fight like one," he yelled in fury.

Anger flickered in Inga's face. She raised her hand briefly in a quick gesture of contempt then spun the big Bay around in a beautifully coordinated movement. With a touch the horse was into a brisk canter that sent the loose dirt of the path flying.

"Let's get her," her brother's friends yelled and the three set out after Inga.

Rene released her grip on the reins and her mare broke instantly, galloping after the racing horses. Rene brought her weight up over the withers, urging Bess on but her brother and his friends were still ahead with Inga leading them all.

They reached a banked hill and an auto horn cut the air. The bridge path ran alongside the expressway and was covered with rocks. The mare's shoes clicked against them. Gone was the primeval beauty of the woods. The roar of traffic drowned all peace. Moving swiftly on the inner lane of the expressway, a huge trailer truck tore on by. Suddenly there was a cacophony of auto horns then the huge diesel horn blasted.

Rene's horse skittishly danced beneath her. Her brother's horse bucked; one of his friends was unseated. Then the horn blasted again. The sensitive Bay Inga rode rose on its hind legs. Rene heard its piercing whinny as its front legs frantically pawed the air. Then it fell.

Rene hurried forward. Her brother

leaped from his horse. The Bay thrashed in fright then rolled onto its feet to stand trembling as her brother caught the reins.

Inga laid sprawled upon the hard stones. She lifted her head slightly, pushing aside the offer of help.

"Take your time," Rene's brother said. "Don't get up."

"She might have been killed," Rene cried. "And it would have been all your fault!" She faced her brother angrily, then bent to help Inga up.

The girl's immaculate shirt was torn and streaked with the blood from her cut forehead but she reached for the Bay's reins.

"I'm riding back," she said.

"Don't be stupid," Rene's brother insisted. "You might have a concussion. Walk, we'll take your horse in."

"I'm riding back."

Inga whispered softly to the big Bay

then mounted smoothly. She nodded once to Rene then set off at a walk. Her back very straight.

Rene remounted but her brother held her reins.

"Listen to me, Rene..." then he stopped when he saw her face.

He dropped the lines and she patted Bess quietly as they started back in silence. Rene felt as if she inhabited two worlds simultaneously — one the world to which she now was returning — the other the quiet inner woods of the park which were filled with expectation.

Bess went willingly; she wanted her quiet stall. Rene sat up tall in the saddle; she felt not a little proud. The bridge path ended in a few more paces but it didn't matter. There was next Sunday.

"Next Sunday. Next Sunday."

It was her very first secret and it made her happy.



housewife

wordless elbow deep in soapy foam  
she stands scrubbing the refuse all away  
the remnants of a tedious patient task for them  
unsteady yet, a standing infant clings onto her skirt  
another calls to her from where he plays:  
and he for whom her greater self was sold  
disrupts her muse with husbandly commands  
voiceless communion — that which becomes strength for them.

concealed her prostitution lest they might be hurt  
she stares into her red and wrinkled hands

soundless the soapy foam is taken up  
by all the soil of all the things she's made  
she watches airy rainbow bubbles burst and then  
sees what was once clear water

now turned gray by duty's dirt

pulls out the stopper as if love had bled

and sings:

"bye baby bunting daddy's gone a'hunting."

Susan Staff



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